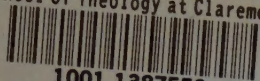


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ETERNITY?

AND

OTHER SERMONS

By BISHOP VAUGHAN



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TIME OR ETERNITY?



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Sermons

TIME  
or  
ETERNITY?  
and  
other preachable Sermons

By  
RT. REV. JOHN S. VAUGHAN, D.D.  
*Bishop of Sebastopolis.*

"I charge thee, before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead . . . PREACH THE WORD: be instant in season and out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine."  
—2 Timothy iv. 1 and 2.

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28 Orchard Street  
London, W.

1914

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**Imprimatur.**

EDM: CAN: SURMONT,

*Vic. Gen.*

*Westmonasterii die 12 Januarii, 1914.*

*Printed in England*

I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE VOLUME TO MY TWO NEPHEWS

FATHER HERBERT VAUGHAN, D.D.

AND

FATHER FRANCIS VAUGHAN

AS A SLIGHT TOKEN OF AFFECTION ; AND WITH THE  
HOPE THAT IT MAY BE OF SOME HELP TO THEM IN  
THEIR ZEALOUS EFFORTS TO BREAK THE BREAD OF  
THE WORD OF GOD TO THE HUNGRY MULTITUDES,  
NOW PASSING THROUGH THE DESERT OF THIS WORLD  
TO THE HOME OF THE FATHER ABOVE.

✠ J. S. V.

*St. Bede's,  
Alexandra Park,  
Manchester,  
1914.*



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## PREFACE

I KNOW not whether these Sermons are worth publishing or not. The reader must judge. It is quite certain that I never would have consented to their appearing in book form had I not been strongly persuaded by many friends, more especially in the United States of America, who have addressed me most urgently on the subject.

For the most part, they are reprinted just as they appeared in the public Press, soon after delivery. Consequently, they necessarily lack the careful arrangement, the choice diction, and the finish that are looked for in more laboured compositions.

My aim throughout, has been : (1) to make my hearers reflect seriously upon old truths, rather than to tickle their fancy with new theories and " profane and vain babblings " (2 Tim. ii. 16) ; (2) to select simple yet forcible arguments ; and (3) to express them in a manner at once intelligible and convincing.

I have called them *Preachable*, because I think it will be found that there is a natural sequence and a logical arrangement in them,

which will greatly facilitate their repetition by others, who may be inclined to make a practical use of them in their own churches.

The truth is, not being blessed with a strong, retentive faculty myself, I have always found it necessary to depend upon reason rather than upon memory. Hence, I have been obliged to connect the subject matter of the discourse, and to link part to part, in such a way that the first statement or argument should, of itself, suggest the second, and the second the third, and so on to the end of the peroration. In this way the memory is not taxed, and even the longest harangue may be carried in the mind, and successfully delivered without the slightest effort or strain.

Another excellent result flowing from this logical order is that a preacher who employs it soon renders himself independent of his surroundings, and may face distractions and interruptions without running any risk of losing the thread of his argument: he may even introduce fresh ideas and illustrations and catch the passing inspirations of the moment, and incorporate them into the body of his address, while in actual process of delivery, without either losing himself or dislocating the logical sequence of ideas.

With these few words of explanation and of

apology, I launch my little venture upon the great sea of public opinion, trusting that, in spite of occasional adverse winds and boisterous weather, its spiritual cargo may be safely deposited where it is most needed, and may become food and nourishment to at least some souls who hunger and thirst after the Word of God.

Indulgent Readers ! I have the honour to be

Yours, very gratefully and  
devotedly in Christ,

✠ J. S. V.

*Feast of St. John the Baptist, 1914.*



TIME OR ETERNITY?



PART I  
CONCERNING GOD AND DIVINE  
THINGS



# TIME OR ETERNITY?

FOR TIME OR FOR ETERNITY?

“Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting.”—John vi. 27.

**I**T is a strange experience, for one who has long dwelt in silence and in solitude, to come up to London, or any other densely populated centre, for the first time, and to take his stand on some commanding eminence in the very heart of the great city, where the pulse of life beats highest and strongest, and there to watch the vast multitudes as they surge and eddy around him upon every side. He feels the very air reverberating with a thousand strange and discordant sounds. Never for one brief instant are they lulled into silence. Thousands and tens of thousands, yea, we may truly say millions, of human beings are around. Each of these is living his own life, and seeking his own ends. Each has his own yearnings, his own ambitions and schemes for the future, and his own personal history. Each is consciously or unconsciously working out his own eternal destiny.

The silent observer, from his coign of vantage, can follow, with his own eyes, but a few hundreds or thousands; but these few are types and representatives of the unseen millions. See them hurrying

and pressing along the dusty streets and public ways. There are men bent under the weight of years ; there are young boys just emerging into life, full of hope and promise ; there are youths in their prime, and women and children of all ages, and of all conditions. Some are in rags and tatters, while others are clad in the choicest and most costly products of the looms. Onward they go ; many in carriages or in motors, or on horseback, but the great majority trudge along on their own weary feet.

Now we will, for a while, turn aside from the throngs pacing outside in the open street, and look in through the shop windows that line both sides of the great thoroughfares. There again we notice men and women equally busy, equally occupied and absorbed. Some are purchasing goods, some are selling them ; some are bargaining and disputing. But all are active, all are interested and intensely in earnest. This is a familiar scene. It is a common picture of ordinary everyday life, as it is passed in this, the vastest city of the world. Week by week, and year by year, there is scarcely any perceptible change.

Yet, what is the secret influence that is stirring up these multitudes and driving them on like the wheels in some complicated piece of machinery, and forcing them to such a strange state of feverish activity ? What can it be that keeps the whole city in such a ferment ? When the sea is agitated and the waves are thundering against the rocks and breaking in great showers of spray, we know

that the winds are playing upon it. But what wind is it that is playing upon this vast sea of humanity and lashing it into such commotion?

Man is not like the irrational beasts. He is not impelled in all he does by blind instinct. No. He lives on a different plane. There is not one solitary individual, in all that immense multitude, but is acting in obedience to something higher than instinct. The very lowest and least among the motley crowd possesses reason and free will. What then is the motive to whose influence they all so readily succumb? How shall we find out? Stay! I will just stop and question one of them. See, here comes a boy, hastening along at a great pace. Watch him, as he threads his way in and out among the restless maze. What a hurry he is in! As he draws near, I put my hand gently on his shoulder, and arrest him. "Stay," I cry, "stay a moment, my lad! Tell me why you are hurrying on so fast? What are you so anxious about?" "Oh," he replies, hardly pausing, "I am on an errand. I have no time to delay." "But you are young," I urge, "why don't you follow your companions, and romp and play as they, in the cricket or football field?" "No," he rejoins, "I have a message to take. I am an errand-boy, a telegraph boy. I am earning money. I shall get sixpence for delivering this letter." Thus I learn that the boy is stirred by hope of reward, and that he works, not for pleasure, not from choice, but for gain.

Now, leaving the open street, I make my way into one of the innumerable shops. I notice that many

men and women are hard at work behind the counter. Indeed, they have been there since morning, and it is now late, yet there they remain still, and just as active as ever. I stand awhile and watch them, and I am struck by their demeanour. See what pains they take to please their customers. How careful they are to ingratiate themselves, how politely they pray one to be seated. They not only work. They do more. They exercise self-restraint, and patience, and are most careful to refrain from every word or gesture that might give offence to their customers, however unreasonable or exacting they may be. I will enter into conversation. I advance towards an elderly man with white hair, and I ask him how long he has been engaged selling goods and pressing his wares upon the public, and serving there behind the counter. He pauses for a moment to think, then he assures me that he has served in that shop "man and boy, these seven and thirty years." Yes, every morning, day by day, and week by week, in winter as well as summer, year in, year out, he has stood at his post and toiled and laboured till evening. How wonderful this is! No austere and mortified monk, no saintly friar of Orders Grey, has ever come with greater regularity each morning to occupy his stall in the choir, and to sing the praises of God, than he has come to do the work of man. "And why," I ask, "do you submit to such drudgery? Why do you consent to endure this confinement, and these long hours? And what is it that confers on you such patience, such perse-

verance, such self-command, and such obedience to your employer? What is the motive?" I know the answer, my brethren, before he tells me. It is expressed in one word—WAGES. For so many shillings a week that old man has been ready to pass the better part of his life in doing violence to himself, in renouncing his natural inclinations, and in carrying out the will of another.

Now, let us pause for a moment, and clearly realise that the service rendered by this typical shopman, though tedious, monotonous and fatiguing, is nevertheless quite freely undertaken and without compulsion. The old man is no slave. Nay! He boasts that he is a "free-born Englishman," and he is proud of it. He is at perfect liberty to abandon his work, and to leave his employer when he likes. If he remains, it is simply because he deliberately chooses to do so. Indeed, he would bitterly complain were he to be turned away. And why is he so anxious and so desirous to work? Is it because he really prefers restraint to liberty? No. Is it because he prefers toil to repose? No. Is it because he finds the society of strangers more agreeable than the society of his wife and children at home? No. Emphatically no! It is simply on account of the earthly reward; that is to say, on account of the wages that he is able to earn. Observe, further, that this man is not peculiar nor exceptional. It is no isolated or rare case that I have set before you. On the contrary. He merely represents one out of the hundreds of thousands, or rather millions, who are acting in precisely the

same manner, all the world over. In factories and mines ; in government offices and public institutions ; on land and on the sea ; above ground and under the ground ; at home and abroad, and in all parts of the world, millions of free men willingly submit to years of labour and drudgery, which entails pain, and weariness, and close attention, and patience, and self-restraint—yes, millions submit to all this for the sake of a little earthly gain, for a slight pecuniary remuneration. They do all that they do, and would readily do even more, were it necessary, just to escape want and poverty, or to secure the means of present enjoyment.

Two facts are clearly written on the very face of human history : (1) The first is that man does not naturally love nor embrace pain and labour and difficulty and hardship. That is to say, he will never choose such things for their own sake. (2) The second fact is that, though he dislikes such things, he will nevertheless overcome his disinclination and accept any amount of labour and fatigue, provided he be offered a sufficient inducement ; provided, for instance, he may thereby ward off poverty and want, and other unpleasant possibilities.

Yes. Man's nature is to follow his inclination. That is true ; but only so long as there is nothing to be gained by resisting it : but it is just as much man's nature to resist it, if only he can be persuaded that it is really worth his while.

But does this principle hold good only when man is dealing with things in the natural order ?

Does his nature undergo a change so soon as he enters into the region of spiritual things? Does he cease to be guided by these principles when he rises from the natural to the supernatural order? Evidently not. If, then, it is found that men will overcome themselves for the sake of securing pleasure, or of avoiding pain, those who would persuade men to labour, and to deny themselves for God, must also hold forth, as inducements, rewards and penalties.

No thoughtful man, looking out upon the world, and weighing well what men are willing to do for a little earthly gain, can, for one moment, doubt but that they would do far more were that gain sensibly increased. If millions are found to toil all day, to dwell in disagreeable and insanitary surroundings, and even to shorten their lives in factories and mills and mines, for a few shillings a week, they would be yet more willing to spend themselves were they offered sovereigns instead of shillings, gold instead of silver. But suppose we are able to offer them something more precious even than gold? What then? And this is no idle supposition. As ambassadors of God, have we nothing better, nothing more priceless, to offer those who will labour for God, than the world has to offer them for the service of man? Does God reward His faithful servants less generously, less liberally, less royally, than an earthly master, that He is so ill-served, and so begrudgingly and imperfectly obeyed? Is it not rather true to say that God deals out His rewards with the utmost

lavishness and prodigality ? Is not life everlasting His return for a few years of service ? Are not untold joys, and unending delights, and inconceivably great pleasures, the wages of a brief moment of cheerful submission ? Has He not undertaken to give us a Kingdom compared to which all earthly riches and treasures are poor and worthless, yea, but dust and ashes, if only we refrain ourselves from evil desires that war against the soul ?

What, indeed, is the value of those things for which men so toil, and moil, compared with the unspeakable and ravishing bliss of Heaven ? Nothing, my brethren, absolutely nothing. Yet vast numbers of men who will refuse no labour to acquire the temporal, will scarcely extend one little finger for the sake of the eternal. All wealth, dignity, fame, power and influence that man can enjoy on earth, even were such things everlasting instead of temporal, are no more as compared to the rewards promised by God, than a microscopic grain of sand is to a mountain, or a drop of the morning dew to the vastest ocean !

Oh ! it fills one with shame and sorrow and indignation to see how much men will do for earth, and how little they will do for Heaven. One cannot but marvel and grow sick at heart, as one looks upon the enormous populations, so active, so intent, so interested in what concerns this brief life, and so listless and indifferent in what concerns the next.

If men did for God what they are now doing for the world, if they spent themselves in promoting His interests with the zeal with which they

are now spending themselves in seeking the interests of their employers, they would be not only saints, but great saints, and true heroes. Call to mind the lives of those whom the Church has canonised and raised upon her altars for our veneration. Did they, as a rule, labour any more or suffer any more than thousands of ordinary Christians are labouring and suffering in their various avocations at the present day? No! The contrast and disparity between the saint and the ordinary worldling lies in the motive—the hidden spring and source of action. Many of the saints have suffered and toiled no more than the children of the world suffer and toil; but they suffered for God, not for gold; for heavenly riches, not for earthly pelf.

Consider the life of a factory hand, or of a labourer in a deep mine; or, still worse, the life of a stoker caged in the bottom of a great steamer, as it ploughs through the tropical seas. Consider these, and countless other such lives of hardship and stress and danger, and then compare them with the life of the most austere recluse, or the most mortified religious kneeling or working in his peaceful cell, and surely we shall be obliged to confess that the worldling often suffers more in the service of the world than the religious in the service of God. Yes. Yet, strange to say, though the world demands much and gives little, it is well served; while God, who demands little and gives much, is served abominably. There are women who will sew and hem and stitch fourteen and fifteen hours a day for less than a shilling, and men who will risk life

and limb for very little more. Yet it is often found that these same men and women will scarcely put one foot forward or move or exert one little muscle to purchase the kingdom of God, and the supernal joys and glory of heaven. They will not rise in time to get to Mass on Sunday ; nor will they curb their basest appetites to keep pure and sober.

Why ? Is it because they have not faith ? Is it because they do not believe in the promises of God ? Is it because heaven is a dream, and eternal happiness a delusion ? Is it because they fancy that Omnipotence is unable to clothe them, so soon as their earthly task is done, with beauty and glory, and to flood their hearts with a happiness beyond their wildest dreams ? Do they doubt of God's power to reward and to punish ? No. That they believe is certain. They must believe, for it is of Catholics that we are speaking. But though they believe, they do not reflect. - Their faith is cold, vague, and unreal. The fact is they are too much taken up with the things of time to think of the things of Eternity : too deeply rooted in the earth to be able to soar up into heaven. Hence hundreds of thousands are found labouring for the bread that perishes and doing little or nothing for that which endureth for ever.

*Sursum corda !* Lift up your hearts. Fix the eyes of your soul upon eternal and imperishable goods. Project your thoughts beyond the passing moment of time, which men call " life," and drawing aside the veil that hides from you the bright and glorious future, contemplate its beauty and its

worth. That, and that alone, is the end worth struggling for: the crown of imperishable glory beyond all price. How can men waste their time on the trifles of earth, which endure but for a day! However great, however marked may be our success here, and in the opinion of men, what is it really worth? Even could we take possession of, and enjoy, the whole earth, what would it avail? Where are those now, who once cut the greatest figure, who have been most successful, and who have won every prize that the world could offer them, such as fortune, high position, influence, power, fame? Where are the great, the mighty, the powerful, before whom the world trembled, and at whose voices nations stood still and held their breath? They once exercised great sway, and were powerful and influential; yes, for a time. They had it all their own way, for a time. They could assert their own authority and dictate their own terms, and seemed almost to be gods rather than men. But for how long? Oh! for an instant. For the brief span of life. But their opportunity passed away as the lightning's flash. Already death has extinguished their glory, has blown out their light, and left them in utter darkness. And then? Ah! Then all that was left of these mighty conquerors and pitiless warriors was flung, like carrion, into the dust. The earth was thrown over their rotting corpses to hide their corruption from sight: and the world went on as before, and troubled itself no more, and thought no more about them than if they had never been.

But yesterday the stoutest heart quailed with fear at the sound of their voices ; to-day the vilest worms, in undisturbed tranquillity, feast and surfeit on their putrid flesh ! For them, at least, the dream is over. The illusion is at an end. Their dignities and their renown have been stripped from them. Crown and sceptre have tumbled down. They may, indeed, command, but, there are none to obey : they may threaten as of old, but their threats are idle. They who judged and condemned others and sacrificed thousands for lust or greed are now themselves judged, yes, judged and—perchance—condemned. Naked and trembling, poor and helpless, they listen to the Supreme and Sovereign Judge : and His sentence will be strictly just ; He will deal with each according to his works.

The question of supreme importance at that dreadful judgment will be, not what power they wielded, not what reputation they enjoyed, not what fame and renown they acquired, but simply how far they conformed their conduct, their thoughts, words, and deeds, to the dictates of conscience and the law of God. Did they obey the commandments ; did they preserve their innocence ; did they live a life humble and pure ; did they keep unspotted from the world ? Were they upright, honest, sober, loyal ? If not, then—whether kings or princes, whether philosophers or warriors, whether noble or ignoble—their names will be held in execration by all generations, and they will go down into oblivion ; and, like refuse, they shall be flung into the flames, there to burn for ever in

the pool of unquenchable fire, so long as God shall be God.

RESOLUTION.

Let us, at least, be wise in time, and make it our aim, above all things, to love, honour, serve and obey Him, who alone holds within His hands the keys of life and of death, of heaven and of hell, and who alone will determine our lot for all eternity.

## THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a merchant, seeking good pearls.”—Matt. xiii. 45.

**H**AVE you ever paused, my dear brethren, in the midst of the bustle of life, to consider the extraordinary events that are constantly taking place around us upon every side? Have you noted, for instance, the marvellous transformations that may be witnessed throughout the whole realm of nature, day by day, and year by year?—changes which fail to arrest our attention, and to startle us, only because of their familiarity.

Thus, to take one or two instances. We let fall a tiny black particle of matter, which we call a seed, into the humid soil, and lo! it at once begins to change its sombre dress, and soon appears decked out as a gorgeously painted flower, loading the passing breeze with the sweetest fragrance. Or, perhaps, in our rambles through the country in the spring of the year, we chance to come across three or four speckled eggs lying quietly together in a downy nest. And all at once we find them taking wings, and flying away, over field and fallow, and arousing the whole neighbourhood with their gladsome song.

Or we find ourselves watching some repulsive-looking caterpillar clinging to a cabbage-stalk, or

taking its breakfast off a nettle leaf, and see ! its numerous legs drop off, its wings of dazzling brightness develop, and its sable coat is exchanged for a gaudy suit of many colours. Then off it darts, a superbly decorated butterfly, fluttering its richly jewelled pinions in the golden sunlight.

Or perhaps we tread a tiny acorn into the ground, and this insignificant object, which we could easily crush beneath our feet, begins to bestir itself, and arousing all its latent energies, proceeds to build itself up into an immense oak, with great outstretching arms and huge branches rising far above our heads—a veritable monarch of the forest.

In a word, we observe innumerable changes and transfigurations upon every side, and magnificent and undreamed-of results arising from the most trifling and unimportant beginnings.

Now, this is interesting to note, because God, who is the Author of the visible and material world, is equally the Author of the invisible and spiritual. Consequently, if such surprises as we have instanced meet the attentive observer in the natural order, yet greater changes and more sublime surprises may safely be predicted in the order of grace and of glory.

The contrast between a repulsive-looking worm and a gorgeous peacock butterfly, or between an acorn, which we can easily hold between our finger and thumb, and a gigantic oak, that securely shelters us from the driving storm, is indeed considerable. But it is as nothing compared to the measureless difference that exists between a poor

weak child of clay, rocked in an earthly cradle; and a glorious saint, basking in all his matchless celestial beauty before the great white throne of the Infinite and the Eternal.

Man is born into this world feeble, ignorant, helpless, and incapable. For a time he lies, hardly conscious, in his mother's arms, quivering on the very confines of nothingness. Yet, like the acorn, he is endowed with immense capabilities. Indeed, it would be difficult to assign any limits to the heights to which he may attain, provided only he uses his gifts aright, and fully corresponds to the graces that God rains down upon him in such abundance.

Pass, for one moment, in thought to heaven. Contemplate the innumerable saints rejoicing there with Almighty God. Oh, how ravishingly beautiful they are ! How surpassingly happy and contented, and how wise and powerful.~ How they revel in their wondrous gifts. In what a limitless ocean of ecstatic pleasure they move. Nothing can injure them. Nothing can sadden them. Nothing can ever interrupt, even for one brief moment, the overflowing torrent of their delights, or cast so much as a fleeting shadow over their unbroken rapture. When compared to that which they enjoy, the beauty of earth is but deformity ; its riches but abject, beggarly ; its glory darkness, and its life a prolonged death. Of this there can be no manner of doubt.

Yet bear this consoling truth in mind : just as the stateliest oak was once but an insignificant

acorn, so even the very highest and most honoured saints in heaven were once poor weak mortals, living upon earth, just like ourselves, and tried and tempted and buffeted much as we are. Even the most favoured amongst those, now reigning above, had to start life as apprentices, and to pass through a period of probation on earth. They, like the rest of us, were called upon to resist their inclinations, to do battle with their enemies; to struggle and toil and suffer and overcome, and to pray and watch and do penance, and the rest.

But this they actually did; and not only did, but did bravely, loyally, generously, and perseveringly, and without faltering, to the very end. It was thus, and thus only, that they came, eventually, to be crowned kings and queens, and to be allotted thrones in the kingdom of their heavenly Father; and to be honoured and exalted beyond all the princes of this world.

Now, the special point I wish to set before you, for your consideration and encouragement, is this: Just as these glorious saints, now reigning triumphant in heaven, were once exactly like ourselves, so, conversely, if we are in downright earnest, we may one day become exactly like to them, and share in all their privileges.

We are actually destined by God for the same end. Nay, more. We are called and invited and most pressingly urged, by the same loving Father, to qualify ourselves for the same eternal companionship with Him in His heavenly courts. And further, we possess similar graces, and the

self-same sacraments. In short, all the means necessary are entirely at our disposal, and well within our reach.

We have everything the same. We have everything that they had . . . But stay ! What do I say : "everything" ? No ! I am wrong. Not quite everything. Let me say, everything but one. For, alas ! it must be acknowledged that there is just one thing which all the saints possessed, and in the highest degree, which we lack. What is that ? They had a strong, energetic will ; we have it not. They were consumed with the most vehement desire to become saints. They realised the value of holiness. They knew and appreciated its worth : and they were firmly and inflexibly resolved to secure it at any price. With the saints there was no shilly-shallying, no hesitancy, no beating about the bush, no foolish attempts to serve God and mammon at the same time, no turning back, no reckoning the cost, no weariness of well-doing ; but rather a calm, fixed, irrevocable determination to reach the goal. Their minds were made up. So that, in spite of every obstacle, they remained as true as steel, and as unbending as marble, in the service of their divine Master.

Thus, it is quite evident that the essential difference between them and ourselves may be reduced substantially to a difference in one point—but that point is a most vital and momentous one. Only a single difference, true ; yet a difference that cuts right through to the very root and marrow of the question ; and which divides off the saint

from the ordinary Christian, as by a yawning gulf.

The truth is, and to our shame be it said, we are not saints, because we do not really care to be saints. We do not deem it worth while. The subject scarcely interests us. Our hearts are cold and the fire of this noble ambition is not yet kindled in them. In a word, our will (upon which all depends, so far as our share in the work is concerned), is almost dormant. We decline to take the necessary trouble. We are too indolent, and indifferent and careless. Thus, the high places in heaven are not for us. No ! And for the simple reason that the high places in heaven are not for cowards, and poltroons, and sluggards. A saint is necessarily a soldier, a hero : always watchful, always fighting, always on the alert. He is made of sterner stuff than to allow anything whatsoever to turn him aside from his noble purpose.

Moreover, he is one who sees and clearly realises that sanctity is not merely worth more, but worth immeasurably more than anything else in this world. He does not simply think, or imagine, or hope, but he is perfectly convinced and fully conscious that all the riches and honours and dignities of the entire world are but as dust and dirt and filth by comparison. He does not merely say so, but he is absolutely certain that it is so. Hence, he will act according to his belief. He will consequently endure all things, and go through fire and water in order to gain possession of it. Thus it falls out that he, and he only, succeeds. What

is more, he alone proves himself to be really and truly wise. We (if we be worldly) may think him foolish, exaggerated, and excessive, but he is just the reverse, as we shall discover when this life is over. Indeed, the saint, and he alone, fully carries out our Lord's own counsel and teaching, conveyed both in word and in parable. If you would contemplate the portrait of a thorough-going Catholic, according to the mind of our Lord, study the parable of the merchant in the Gospel.

Our Lord tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it (St. Matt. xiii. 45). The pearl of great price is, of course, sanctity. Of a "great price," indeed, for its value is so great that it, and it alone, will purchase the kingdom of heaven. Now, consider this merchant. In the first place, he really seeks this pearl. He is not satisfied with wishing for it, or talking about it, or praising it, or waiting for some one to thrust it upon him; he does not say he will seek it later, some day, etc., but he bestirs himself at once, and travels about, and undertakes long and tedious journeys, and runs many and great risks, in order to discover it. In short, he is desperately in earnest. In the second place, having at last found it, he is ravished by its beauty, and wholly captivated by its loveliness, and at once makes up his mind to secure it at any sacrifice. He does not quarrel about the price, though it is no doubt exceedingly high, but he goes back home, and sells

everything he possesses, sells "all that he has," the scripture says, in order to gain possession of this superb and matchless gem.

The attitude of this merchant towards the pearl is set before us by Jesus Christ as the type of what our attitude should be towards sanctity. We should act in the same determined, energetic, and generous manner, and be ready to sacrifice all for sake of this heavenly pearl.

But do we so act? No, indeed. Far from it! We may, perhaps, bestow an occasional thought upon it. We may even admire it, in the abstract, and exclaim, "How beautiful a thing is sanctity! How exquisite! How admirable!" We may even go so far as to say that we would like to possess it. That is to say, we would like it, if it does not cost us too much. In short, there is no zeal, no enthusiasm. How slow and calculating and cautious and niggardly we are! And how mean and ungenerous! Though heaven is at stake, yet we want to bargain, to beat down the price; to do as little as we possibly can. We will consent to take this pearl of sanctity, but it must be at a considerable reduction. We would be glad to have it, but we are not prepared to pay much for it. We are willing to give something, but just as little as possible. And then, before we have done bargaining and haggling, the opportunity goes by, the prize is lost, and we have passed into eternity, and learn—when it is too late—what thorough-paced fools we have been.

It was not thus with the saints. A saint does not stop to argue. A glance convinces him that

the pearl is really above and beyond all price, and worth infinitely more than is asked for it, or than any words can express. So that, at once, his mind is made up, and he hurries off to sell all that he has, in order that he may have the means of paying for it. He "sells all"; by which is meant that he renounces everything that can sever his heart from God; he throws aside all unlawful pleasures, all pride and pomp, and lust and sensuality and sin, gets rid of every obstacle,—and so "sells all that he has"—in order to lay hold of the one only supreme and infinite good, viz., the possession of God, for evermore. Oh, how earnest, how courageous, and how determined were the saints!

How is it that we are so sluggish and indifferent? Why cannot we arouse ourselves and show a little more earnestness? There is not much time left in which to make up our minds. The term of life is short to begin with, and that short term is already more than half gone for most of us. Yet we still pause and hesitate, and are loath to deny or to renounce ourselves in the least thing.

How seldom we reflect on God; how carelessly and hurriedly we say our prayers; how rarely and how perfunctorily we approach the Sacraments, and how distractedly do we assist at the tremendous sacrifice of the Mass. How little real pains we take to keep a guard over our tongues, to practice temperance, sobriety, perfect honesty in business, and in our dealings with others; gentleness and charity and humility, and the rest.

It is hard, you may perhaps say, to exert oneself,

and to do violence to one's animal nature, and to overcome passion and the seductions of the world. But is it really so very hard? I must make a distinction.

It may be hard, if we have no solid appreciation, no ardent love of sanctity; but if we once can be got to realise its value and its immense advantages, the difficulties vanish. If we valued it as the saints, every obstacle would go down before us, and we would easily overcome every difficulty.

Cast your eyes about you, and see how gladly men will deny themselves and exert themselves for the sake of purely earthly gains, and be ashamed to do less for those which are eternal and imperishable. For the sake of some purely temporal advantage, to secure some slight increase of income, or to extend their business connection, men will submit to toil and drudgery and self-denial with the greatest readiness. Then say: Shall we do less for the sake of heaven and God?

#### RESOLUTION.

Oh, for very shame, let us begin to arouse ourselves to action, and live as though eternity with its infinite possibilities for weal or woe, were not merely a dream but the intensest of all realities. Begin at once, for death rapidly approaches; delay no longer, for the night cometh, when no man can work.

# GOD'S REVELATIONS OF HIMSELF

## CREATURES TEACH US TO KNOW HIM

“All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God.”—Wisdom xiii. 1.

THE science which treats of God and His divine attributes we call Theology. Now theology is found stored up in countless learned volumes, and huge dusty tomes, in the universities and public libraries, and in the great monasteries and seminaries throughout the world. But it is also to be found in the open country, in the mountains and forests, in the seas and rivers, and yet more in the sidereal universe glittering above our heads. In fact the whole physical universe may be regarded as a sublime and superb volume written and illustrated by the hand of God, in which we can see and contemplate His adorable perfections, and come to a fuller knowledge of His attributes.

And assuredly there is no higher nor more magnificent nor more inspiring subject, for God is infinitely raised above all the works of His hands, and is so superior to all other beings, that there is no single attribute or quality in God that can be predicated of them—at least, not in the same manner: no, not even existence.

Creatures do indeed exist, but not in the sense in which God exists. They are all dependent upon Him, and indebted to Him during each moment of their existence, for all they are, and for all they have; whereas, He, on the contrary, is self-existent and independent, and indebted to none: the very centre and source of all that is, has been, or ever shall be.

No knowledge is so sublime and no knowledge is so salutary, or indeed so absolutely necessary as the knowledge of God. It constitutes the very condition of our life and salvation. Hence, Jesus Christ addressing His Eternal Father exclaimed: "This is eternal life that they may know Thee, the only true God" (John xvii. 3). And St. Paul, one of the most gifted and enlightened of the saints, did but express a sentiment shared by them all when he declared, with a heart full of love and fervour, that he "knew nothing but Jesus Christ" [that is to say, God incarnate], "and Him crucified" (I Cor. ii. 2).

So, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit assures us that: "All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God" (Wisdom xiii. 1). Even in Heaven, and throughout eternity, our supreme and essential joy must arise from the intimate knowledge of Him, who is the infinitely beautiful and the uncreated goodness.

A fully satisfying knowledge of the Supreme Being is, of course, reserved for the next life, when, as the Scripture puts it, we shall see Him "face to face," and when "We shall know, even as we are known."

But, brethren, even now, in the land of our exile,

and amid our trials and temptations, it is absolutely necessary that we should be able to form some notion of Him, and of His attributes. How comes this to be necessary? Well, because we are bound to love God, and it is impossible to love anyone whom we know not. Love is the first and the greatest commandment, love is also the very measure of all true perfection; but love cannot exist until there be knowledge. Love grows out of knowledge, as a flower grows out of its roots. When faith opens out to us and reveals the beauty and loveliness of God, then is it that we grow sensible of His attractions, and love is born in our hearts; and we become loyal and zealous and enthusiastic in His service. But even the beauty of God Himself, though limitless, can awaken within us no sentiment of love or of longing, nor even the faintest glimmer of desire, unless it be in some measure realised. The old scholastic dictum still holds good, viz. *Nihil volitum, nisi cognitum*; nothing can be desired but what is known. We shall never love God, nor yearn after Him, no, nor even reverence or fear Him except in the measure in which we learn to know Him. How vital then is this knowledge.

So soon as we realise that knowledge is an essential condition of service, we shall understand the pains God has taken to make Himself known. He makes five great revelations of Himself. He reveals Himself in the first place by means of our conscience. Every one is aware of this strange interior monitor. Every one can hear this faint, yet clear and unmistakable voice, pointing out the path of duty, and

proclaiming certain actions good and certain actions bad, and distinguishing justice from injustice, vice from virtue. We cannot silence that voice. Even if we disobey it, it will continue to reproach us, and if we should insist upon doing wrong, it will not fail to darken our minds with dreadful forebodings of future retribution. And what is that but God speaking to and upbraiding His guilty creature ?

Secondly, God reveals Himself through the Incarnation. We behold Him clothed in our humanity and living amongst men ; speaking and instructing, and admonishing them, with His own divine lips. Nothing can be more sublime than the matter, nothing more simple than the manner of His teaching. Nothing could tell us so plainly of the unspeakable goodness and loveliness of God.

Thirdly, He reveals Himself to us likewise through the inspired pages of Holy Scripture, where prophets and apostles and evangelists vie with one another in proclaiming His will, and in enunciating His doctrine, in many a well-known passage, thereby filling the mind of the attentive reader with the knowledge of heavenly things.

Then the fourth way in which God reveals Himself is through the living and indefectible agency of His Bride, the infallible Church. Throughout the ages she speaks, and we all realise and confess that her voice is the voice of God. " Who heareth you heareth Me." Great and admirable is our privilege, and absolutely secure is our path, if we are humble enough to follow the one pointed out by this divinely appointed guide.

The knowledge of God and of His divine will streams into us from these great sources, and furnishes us with all that is requisite to stir up within our hearts sentiments of love and obedience. But, fifthly, there is yet another revelation of God, and that comes to us from material and physical objects : from earth and sun and sea and sky. It is true that the earth is made in order to provide us with a temporary home and dwelling-place ; but though that is undoubtedly one of the purposes it serves, it is not the only one, nor yet the most important. Its chief purpose is to speak to us of God, and to raise our thoughts up to the Creator. The objects all around us speak to us of Him, and reflect His attributes. So that the prophet Isaias did not hesitate to say : “ The earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord ” (xi. 9).

This is so undeniable, that those who fail to see God in His works are held inexcusable. “ By the things that are made, the invisible things of God are clearly seen,” is the teaching of St. Paul : and “ by the greatness of the beauty of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby,” says the Book of Wisdom (xiii. 5).

In short, it is of faith that God reveals Himself through Nature, and may be known by reason ; for this much was defined by the Vatican Council held in the year 1870.

Yet, strange to say, there are many who fail to realise the intimate connection between Nature and Nature’s God, and who allow long years to go by without rising from the study and contemplation of

the visible and the material to the contemplation of the invisible and the spiritual.

I say, advisedly, that it is strange, and for the simple reason that in analogous cases no such difficulty seems to be experienced. When, *e.g.*, men behold any work of human art, they at once think of the artist. Then why do they not think of the Divine Artist when they contemplate the works of divine art, the creation around ?

Centuries have rolled slowly away since the world-renowned Raphael and Michael Angelo plied their magic brush and scalpel. Yet no thoughtful student can contemplate their priceless masterpieces, even at the present day, without at once recognising the consummate ability, admirable taste, unapproachable skill, and artistic treatment of the artists. Nor is the world satisfied merely to admire the works they have bequeathed. It will ever associate their names with their works. While its eyes are riveted upon the canvas or the marble, its thoughts instinctively fasten on the man, and it pauses to marvel at the genius that conceived, and the hand that wrought such wonders, until exclamations are forced from its lips : What a genius ! What originality ! What wealth of conception ! What power of execution !

It is much the same when we stand spellbound before some splendid piece of architecture—a gorgeous palace, a princely monument, a superb cathedral. Here again, we are wont to gauge the man by his work. The beauty, the solidity, the symmetry, the grandeur, and the perfect proportions

of the structure, rearing its stately form before us in all its wealth of detail, are a true revelation of the skill and talents and ability of the designer, who both watched over its progress and carried it on to successful completion.

Why cannot men reason in a similar manner in dealing with the works of the Divine Artist ?

No doubt a beautiful picture is a very wonderful thing, and our mind never for a moment strays away so far from reason and common sense as to suppose that such a wonderful object produced itself. We attribute its existence to an artist ; and, what is more, to an artist extremely gifted and possessing great talents.

But after all, however wonderful the picture may be, surely the artist himself who produced the picture is far more wonderful. The man is greater than his work ; the author is above his book ; the sculptor is superior to his carving ; and, if you cannot conceive a picture or a statue without postulating some intellect to produce it, how much less can you conceive a painter or a sculptor without postulating some vastly superior intellect to produce him ?

All Nature speaks of God. Every object tells us something about Him. But let us select one by way of example. Take, then, man himself ; and let us, in dealing with man, confine ourselves even to man's lesser part : I mean the body.

What a strange, complicated, and marvellous object it is ; though constructed from the flimsiest materials, yet it is held together year after year by virtue of some mysterious power within it, which we

*call* life, but which we cannot explain. Well may we say with Carlyle, "When I put my hand upon a human body, I feel I am touching a thing divine."

Who can seriously reflect upon its many wonderful parts, so exquisitely built up, and so skilfully arranged, each different, yet all correlated? How shall we explain it, or account for it, without having recourse to God? Men will tell us that the mother produces the child. But that really tells us nothing. She is but an instrument, one might almost say a blind, unconscious instrument in the hands of a higher power. No mother, however clever and learned, can tell us how the body of the child is formed; how bone is fitted to bone, and muscle to muscle, and sinew to sinew. She has no idea, no, not the faintest, how each organ of sight, of hearing, of feeling, and so forth is formed from her own blood, nor how each is placed in its proper position and taught and empowered to carry out its own particular functions.

Thus, to descend into particulars. She knows nothing of optics, yet the eyes of the newly-born babe, constructed in total darkness, are rendered fit to exercise their power, and are sensitive to every change of light and colour. She is totally ignorant of the very first principle of acoustics, yet the child is provided with the perfect mechanism of the ear, by means of which he becomes responsive to every sound and every changing tone.

And the heart! That strange, throbbing, restless heart that pumps the blood throughout the entire body night and day, without cessation! What

shall we say of that ? Go and ask the mother how she contrived so wondrous an organ, and by what secret power she set it going, in the first instance, and keeps it beating with the regularity of clock-work ?

Ah yes ! We may ask, but can expect no reply. She can but proclaim her ignorance. She will cry, " Ah ! I know not ; I am ignorant. I am but an instrument used by a higher power. I am in the hands of God, just what a brush is in the hands of a Raphael or a Dominachino." " The Lord, He is God ; He made us and not we ourselves " (Ps.).

Let us not be foolish, but realise and confess that no blind chance, no mere accident, no fortuitous concourse of atoms could possibly have resulted in anything so beautiful, so orderly, so harmonious ! To seek to extinguish our faith in a Creator by such foolish explanations is an insult to our common sense and an outrage upon reason. No ! Rather, with the apostle, let us cry out : " By the visible things the invisible are rendered apparent," and the Creator is reflected and seen in the creature. If man is, then God, too, must be. If I exist, then clearly God must exist, for I can no more account for my own existence, without first postulating His, than I can account for the shadow without first postulating the substance which throws the shadow.

This, of itself, should be enough, but God's claims are forced upon us still more emphatically by the demands of science itself. Let us, for argument's sake, grant what is in reality an absurdity. Let us pretend to favour the view that man's body is

formed from and by man, without any reference to any Supreme Being. Even though we were to admit this absurdity, it would scarcely help us out of the difficulty, since it removes it only one step further back. We still have to account for primitive man. How did he come into existence? One may, in imagination, go back from one generation to another. One may declare that as A came from B, so B came from C, and C came from D ; and so on, generation after generation. True : but, even along this dreary road, we cannot proceed very far. Science itself blocks the way. Science reins up our runaway steed, Fancy, and forces it to stop dead. For it declares that there was a period in the world's history (it matters nothing how remote) when the earth could not possibly have harboured either man, or any other living creature. A period, extending over many thousands of years, during which the whole earth was a ball of liquid fire ; when the heat was such that the very metals flowed with the freedom of water over its agitated, restless surface. At that stage in its history, the earth, in a state of incandescence, moved through the amplitude of the heavens as a veritable sun, emitting a heat so excessive, that no creature of flesh and blood—had such then existed—could have trodden its surface, or even have approached within a thousand miles without being reduced at once to a cinder. Not merely, therefore, did man not exist anywhere upon earth, but he could not have done so. Science, apart from Theology, asserts emphatically that any life, such as ours, would have been an absolute impossibility.

Then whence did life first appear ? Here, observe, we are talking not theology but science. We are stating the doctrine of geologists and physicists. They enable us to make two assertions, to state two facts.

Firstly—Once upon a time, it matters not how long ago, man was not. Fact Number One. Secondly—Man now is. Fact Number Two. Then where did the first man come from ? How did he arise ? Did he make himself ? Did he start up suddenly out of the ground ? Did he drop from the clouds ? Or did the wheels of chance, for ever turning and revolving and grinding, at last, little by little, grind him out ? To argue thus is to argue as a fool or a simpleton. But one answer is so much as conceivable. God made man. Plain practical common sense imperatively demands not merely a cause, but a cause that shall be at once reasonable and adequate. God is the cause—there is no other to dispute it. Every other theory serves but to show, by its inherent absurdity, that we cannot deny a Creator without stultifying ourselves, doing violence to reason and outraging every principle of sound logic.

The fact of God's existence is emblazoned upon the whole creation in indelible characters, that none but the wilfully perverse can fail to understand. As already shown, we cannot account for even our own physical being, without first postulating that of the Creator. And if even the material body cannot be explained without first proclaiming His existence, still less can we, without Him, explain the

existence of our spiritual being, *i.e.* our soul, with all its powers and faculties and attributes—its memory, understanding, will, imagination, and the rest which is immeasurably more admirable, wonderful, and inexplicable than the fleshy form that it animates and in which it dwells.

But there is no time now to enter upon so lofty and so exhaustless a theme.

Then let us conclude as we began. Nature is a great book written, for our instruction, by the finger of God, in which we may read and study and learn, without ever exhausting its contents. May the Divine Author grant us grace to con its wondrous pages to our own spiritual profit, and ever to interpret it aright, so that it may tell us more and more of His greatness, His power, His beauty, and His goodness, and fill our hearts with an ever-increasing knowledge and an ever-deepening love of Him, till at length the shadows pass, and the obscuring clouds of earth roll away, and we are able to contemplate His divine Personality in the serene splendour of heaven, there to rejoice with Him for evermore, in the full possession of His undying love.

#### RESOLUTION.

Call to mind the inspired words of St. Paul to the Romans, chapter 1: "From the creation of the world, the invisible things of God are seen to be clearly reflected in the visible things ; especially His power and divinity ; so that they who deny Him are inexcusable." And resolve to do your utmost to show Him the love and adoration denied Him by the pagans

## THE LOVE OF GOD

“He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is Charity.”—I St. John iv. 8.

**N**OTHING in this wide world is half so beautiful or half so winning as pure, disinterested love. Nothing penetrates so deeply into the very substance of our being, or so entwines itself around the fibres of our heart. Love is, in the moral and social order, what the sun is in the physical order, viz., the source of life and beauty and content. The affectionate intercourse between friend and friend, between parent and child, between lover and loved, and between bride and bridegroom must be reckoned among the sweetest and most delightful of all earthly experiences. Indeed, earth knows nothing more delectable and joy-giving.

Yet what after all is *human* love, even at its best, but the faintest echo of the *divine*? What but a dim and imperfect reflection of a love which is infinite and uncreated!

We know something of human love, but what do we know of divine? Scarcely anything. Oh, the intensest and fiercest love that ever burns in a human heart is but cold and dull and dead—and no love at all—when compared with that.

In the creature, love is but an attribute; in God, it is His very substance. In the creature it is

narrow, circumscribed, and finite. In God it is absolutely infinite. The creature may be said to possess love. He may be said to have it in a higher or lower degree, for with him it is but a quality. But we cannot so speak of God's love. We cannot (strictly speaking) say, "God *has* love." We must say, "God *is* love" (1 John iv. 8). His love is indistinguishable from Himself. It is His essence, His very being. Indeed, Love is God, for God is Love! *Deus charitas est.*

This love is consequently not only uncreated and eternal, but it is infinite: and, being infinite, it needs an infinite object on which to expend itself. No mere creature can suffice for that. Although every creature is bathed in this divine love, just as every flower in a garden is bathed in the sunlight, yet, as no flower can absorb or draw to itself the whole light of the sun, so no creature can absorb or contain the whole infinity of God's love. Every being is nourished and sustained by it; but, though it is infinite on the part of the giver, it is restricted and limited by the very condition of the receiver. In fact, just as a ray of light is bent on passing from one medium to a denser, so this infinite love becomes finite in passing from the Creator to the creature. That is to say, though in itself infinite, yet its effect is limited by the necessary limitation of the creature. Consequently, though each receives more or less according to its capacity, none can receive it infinitively.

But God would not be, and could not be, the supremely happy Being that we know Him to be,

were there no one on whom He could lavish the entire and full force of His affections. In order to be perfectly happy He must have an object capable of receiving an infinite love, and capable of giving back an infinite love in return. We say He must, and we say so advisedly, for it is a necessity of His nature and an indispensable condition of His infinite happiness.

And how is this condition satisfied ? The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity contains the answer. That mystery informs us that God is not alone. He is no solitary, no isolated Being. For, while essentially one in nature, He is essentially three in Persons. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost constitute together a complete and perfect society. Each is equal to each, and co-eternal, and of the same substance, yet absolutely distinct. The Father can give, and the Son can receive, the entire infinitude of love that is in God. The infinite love of each of the divine Persons can empty itself into the heart of each ; and each Person can and does receive back from each all that He gives, without loss or diminution. In short, the Three Persons love infinitely and are loved infinitely, since there is absolutely nothing to limit or to set any boundary to this love, either on the part of the giver or on the part of the receiver.

Thus, God is in no way dependent on men or angels, but contains the plenitude of happiness within the compass of His own wondrous and mysterious Being. And just as He existed for an eternity before any creature existed, as happy as

now, so might He have continued equally happy throughout an eternity to come, even though no creature had been created. His love alone is *all-satisfying*.

So vast, so deep, so broad, so wide is it, that no creature can or ever will be able fully to realise it. It may be compared to an ocean without shore or limit, an ocean of which no human plummet can ever take the soundings. Not only now, but even hereafter, those mysterious depths must remain for ever unexplored. The highest of the Cherubim and of the Seraphim, in spite of all their exceptional gifts and powers, are just as incapable of measuring the latitude and the longitude of God's love as is the least of the elect.

Though some will know more and some less yet none can possibly exhaust the infinite expanse of this attribute. As one diver may plunge a little deeper and penetrate a little further into some bottomless sea, so, of course, one saint may dive a little deeper than another into the limitless depths of the divinity ; but no one, either now, or later, or indeed at any time or under any circumstances, can reach any bourn or limit ; for it is not given to any created intelligence to measure the Measureless or to grasp the Infinite.

Now, it is the very nature of love to be diffusive and to expand. And this is more especially true of Infinite Love. Hence, the love of God is not confined within His own being, but wells up, and overflows, and pours, as it were, in copious streams upon innumerable creatures, more especially upon

those that are endowed with intelligence and immortality. The very fact that you and I, my brethren, are enjoying life at this moment, is but one of the many consequences of that diffusiveness. God really had no need of us, or of any creature whatsoever. Creatures can add nothing at all to His essential happiness. This stands to reason. A happiness already infinite can receive no addition ! Were it capable of any increase, it would at once forfeit all claim to the title. Oh, had we to wait and wait in our state of original nothingness until such time as God had need of us, we should never have been created at all ; and neither earth nor heaven would have harboured a single living soul.

God made us indeed, but not through necessity, nor on account of any benefit He could hope to derive from us, but through pure, disinterested love. " Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love : therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee " (Jeremias xxxi. 3).

But what is love ? To love a person is to wish him well. So soon as ever one desires another's well-being, love is born, even though the desire be but slight. But according to the measure in which the benevolent desire increases, so in a like measure does love increase.

If I love another I wish him well. I seek to promote his happiness. The gifts and favours I bestow upon him are, at once, so many tokens, and so many symptoms of this love. And the more precious and costly and difficult of acquisition the gifts are, the stronger is the love which they betoken

—and this strength increases with every increase of difficulty that has to be overcome in securing them.

If we apply this test to the love that burns in the heart of God for us, we shall realise in some measure how intense and vehement it is. But it is impossible, in a single discourse, to pursue this study over the whole field of enquiry. We should have to weigh each special gift: our creation, our preservation, our gifts of body, our gifts of mind, our gifts in the natural order, and in the supernatural order, the gifts which we already possess and enjoy, and the yet greater gifts which are awaiting us in another life. But, since it is impossible to deal with such a multitude of benefits, graces, and privileges and favours, we will confine ourselves to a consideration of one of the most startling and magnificent. I refer to the gifts conferred upon us through the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God.

There is nothing more wonderful, nothing more admirable, nothing better calculated to express and to emphasise the immensity of God's love for man. Let us briefly recapitulate the circumstances that led up to that glorious consummation.

Our first parents had sinned. Their sin had involved all their descendants, so that the entire race was doomed, and heaven's gates were fast barred against them. Furthermore, the crime being committed against the *infinite* majesty of God, was, in a certain sense, of *infinite* malignity. Before man could receive pardon, and be reinstated, the claims of outraged Justice had to be considered. Now, in order that Justice might be fully and

completely satisfied two conditions had to be complied with ; the one regarded the ransomer himself, and the other the ransom.

1st. Since man had offended, so man must make reparation ; man must pay the penalty, and offer the ransom.

2nd. Since the offence was infinite, so the compensation must also be infinite.

Verily, these two demands seemed to make man's unfortunate condition utterly hopeless. The two conditions seemed wholly irreconcilable and mutually exclusive. It seemed, in fact, absolutely impossible to comply with one condition, without, at the same time, violating the other. To express the position figuratively : Two doors had to be opened, to enable man to return to his state of integrity. Yet the very act which opened the one door seemed necessarily to close the other.

Thus, if, on the one hand, *man* had to pay the ransom, then the ransom could not be infinite. On the other hand, if the ransom had to be *infinite*, then no mere man could ever pay it, since he is but a finite creature. Thus, it looked as though divine Justice never would and never could be really appeased, and that consequently man must remain in his sins and submit to his awful doom.

Let us, for clearness' sake, represent the whole subject in a human way. Let us imagine God taking the angels into His confidence. " How," He asks, " is man to be saved from the consequences of his crime, without violating Justice ? " He lays the whole case before them, but, however carefully

they go over the ground, they can devise no way out of the impasse. No man can offer an infinite satisfaction, nor indeed any creature whatsoever. Even if the highest angel in heaven had been willing to offer himself as a victim, his sacrifice would be but of finite value, and therefore utterly useless for the purpose.

God alone is infinite. God alone can offer an adequate atonement. But even were He to offer it, one of the conditions would still be wanting : for, since it was a member of the human race who had committed the crime, so it was requisite that a member of the same human race should make compensation. As one man sufficed to bring ruin upon all, so one man might bring salvation to all. Not only must the sacrifice be itself of infinite value, but it must be offered by the hands of a man, a member of the human race, one of our own flesh and blood.

Who among that glorious host could suggest any solution to such a difficulty ? Who among that myriad of magnificent intelligences could discover a way out of such an impasse ?

There was but one way. But it was a way that no created intelligence would ever, for one single moment, dream of proposing. No angel or archangel would have deemed it feasible, or have dared to suggest it, still less to recommend it. Such a solution would appear more, yea, immeasurably and infinitely more, than even the most sanguine could expect from God. And what was that ? It was that one of the divine Persons of the adorable

Trinity should come down to earth and become man, that He should, in short, engraft Himself into the human family, and be as one of ourselves, with a human mother, a human soul, and a human body, and "like to us in all things, excepting sin" (Heb. iv. 15).

But who could brook such an idea ? What ! the King of kings offer Himself up for the sake of a slave ? The Creator for a sinful creature ? The Infinite God for a contemptible and insolent rebel ? What ! God become man ? God lower Himself beneath the least of the angels ? What ! He who dwells in light inaccessible, who rides on the wings of the Seraphim, who holds the ocean in the hollow of His hand, who poises the earth on three fingers ! Shall He stoop so low, shall He sink to our level ? Shall He, who is omnipotent, condescend to our weak estate, and experience, in His own person, hunger and thirst and cold and weariness, nakedness and death ?

Oh, what angel in heaven, as he gazed on the blinding splendour and the uncreated magnificence and the awful majesty of God, could bring himself to imagine that the omnipotent would ever consent to clothe Himself with the foul rags of our fallen humanity, and be actually numbered among the children of men !

But stay ! God's love is not to be measured by our poor human love. " His ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts."

His love is as boundless and as infinite as Himself. In fact, as we have seen, it is Himself. *Deus charitas est.*

Human love one may exhaust. Divine love, never ! A created affection one may at last weary and wear out, Not the eternal love of God. " Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it " (Cant. viii. 7).

Wonderful to relate, the very way that seemed wholly impossible and out of the question was nevertheless the way actually chosen by God. To the bewilderment and breathless surprise of heaven and earth, God solved what appeared to be an insoluble difficulty by resolving to take upon Himself our human nature. By the act of the Incarnation He became at once God and Man. Thus, the one indivisible and divine Person owned and controlled, at one and the same time, two distinct and totally unlike natures. By this means every condition that the most rigorous justice demanded could be completely satisfied.

As the first Adam brought ruin upon the entire race by his disobedience, so the second Adam, by His obedience, was able to bring upon it grace and salvation. For Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, united in Himself two powers, which seemed mutually exclusive and mutually destructive, to wit : the power to suffer, because He was man ; and the power to merit infinitely, because He was God.

Here we must make no mistake. Most truly, most certainly, it was God who died, though it was in the created nature which He had assumed. In fact, the ransom which He paid was of infinite value, solely and precisely because it was offered by God Himself.

When Jesus expired upon the cross, when, worn out with agony and loss of blood, He bowed His head and "gave up the ghost," who was it that died ? Was it a person ? Unquestionably. But what kind of person ? A human person ? No. That was impossible, for, although in Jesus Christ there are two natures, there is only one Person, and that Person is divine. There is no human person in Christ, but only the Person of God the Son.

Now, my brethren, place before the eyes of your soul two scenes. In the first, represent yourself standing in the heavenly courts. You gaze around ; and, behold ! a celestial brightness and beauty floods all space. Countless blessed spirits stand about the great white throne. Myriads of angels and archangels, of thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, of cherubim and seraphim, each outrivalling the other in splendour and perfection, make a heavenly-melody with their canticles and hymns of praise. And there, in their midst, but outshining them all, as the sun outshines the stars, is seated, "in light inaccessible" (1 Tim. vi. 16), the infinite and eternal God, the source of all their joy and happiness, and the very life of their life. Now, having feasted your eyes upon that scene, turn to another. Transport yourself in spirit to the bare, bleak mountain side of Calvary. You gaze as best you can through the gathering gloom. You descry a howling, disorderly crowd of blaspheming Jews and Pharisees and doctors of the law and dissolute soldiers. Their jeers and curses and words of mockery and derision fill the air. In

their midst there rises a ghastly, infamous gibbet, a rudely fashioned cross, that holds a writhing, bleeding, mangled, and agonising human form. The head is bent ; the brow is pierced with a thorny crown ; the hands and feet are dug through with nails ; the face is livid and swollen from blows, and defiled with spittle. The whole body quivers from the intensity of the pain. For, from the sole of the feet to the crown of the head " there is no soundness in Him " (Is. i. 6). His whole person is bruised and lacerated and torn and wounded. Untold suffering is expressed in every feature, while the blood oozes out from a thousand gaping wounds. Who ? Oh, who is this helpless, despised, insulted, down-trodden and outraged Being, with no one to offer Him a word of sympathy or a look of compassion, with no one to check or temper the fury of His tormentors ?

Who is it ? Dare I say ? Hark, ye heavens, and stand still, O earth ! O mystery of mysteries ! O wonder above all wonders ! It is none other than God. Yes ! Behold and marvel. He who covers the very hills with verdure, and who adorns the very lilies of the field with beauty, is rudely stript of His last garment. He who feeds, not only man, but even the beasts of the forest and the birds of the air, is offered vinegar and gall. He who bestows life on all who live is Himself condemned to a malefactor's death.

But how came this to be ? What has dragged the Infinite from His throne in Heaven and fastened Him to the cross ? Has anyone power over God ?

Does any being exist capable of exercising the slightest authority over Him, or of touching so much as a hair of His head ? No ! a thousand times, no ! In presence of His irresistible might all creation is just as though it were not.

What then has wrought the change ? What has brought about the transformation ? Nothing but the miraculous power of love : nothing but God's longing to rescue His own creatures from the eternal consequences of their folly. That alone suffices to explain the prodigy.

Will not a mother risk her own life to save that of her child ? Will not she face fire and sword, and laugh at death, even in its most terrible and hideous form, in order to rescue and safeguard her own helpless offspring ? Of course she will. And who fashioned that mother's heart ? Who gave her that irrepressible instinct ? Who ? God alone ! And can He give what He has not got ? A mother's devotion, a mother's love is but a spark from the consuming fire that burns in the heart of God—a feeble ray from the infinite Sun of Justice. Is the ray more than the sun ? Is the shadow more than the substance ? Is the Creator's own love less generous, less ardent, less heroic, than that which He has placed in a mother's heart ? "A mother," says the Holy Spirit, " will not forget her child, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb : and *even if she should forget*, yet will I not forget thee " (Isaias xlix. 15).

Thus, with unspeakable pain and agony, did the great Lover of our souls snatch us from the appalling

fate that awaited us, as "a brand is snatched from the burning" (Zach. iii. 2). In the Birth, Life, and Passion of God Incarnate we possess the highest and most incontestable proof of a love which stops at nothing, and which overflows all bounds.

Yet the Incarnation is, after all, but one proof selected out of a multitude. But let this suffice for the present. To fully and exhaustively comprehend all the heights and depths of charity contained in that one mystery alone would need an eternity, and for us limited beings even an eternity would prove too short, since a love that is infinite can never be adequately realised or understood save by the uncreated mind of God Himself, and it was an *infinite* love that decreed the Incarnation.

#### RESOLUTION.

Let us do all we can to prove our love of Him, who has done so much to prove His love of us. Amen.

# THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

## MOTIVES OF CREDIBILITY

“My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”—John vi. 56.

**I**F, dear brethren, we were addressing unbelievers, with the purpose of convincing them of the truth of the great mystery of the Blessed Sacrament, we would limit ourselves to the consideration of one or two of the many proofs, so that we might be able to develop them fully and exhaustively. But, since it is our happiness to be speaking to you, who are of the household of the Faith, we feel that our words will be more profitable if we summarily gather together, into one great accumulative proof, those various arguments, or “motives of credibility” which, when considered singly, lose a considerable amount of their force. It is with such arguments as it is with the rays of the sun ; though feeble individually, yet, when focussed together in one point, they become of quite irresistible force and power. Hence, there is no doubt but that a weak faith is strengthened and a languid devotion is revived, not so much by reviewing this or that particular argument, as by massing them together, and considering them as a whole. A single stream is easily resisted, but when a number of streams meet, and form a mighty river, it bears

down all resistance, and cannot be stayed : so is it when argument is joined to argument.

I begin by putting myself the plain, simple question : Why is it that I believe so firmly and without the slightest hesitation, or shadow of doubt, that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, the second Person of the adorable Trinity, is verily and substantially present in the Blessed Sacrament, together with (by concomitance) the Father and the Holy Ghost ? No sooner do I set myself the question, than quite a number of strong motives at once suggest themselves. Each of these is of considerable weight, even when weighed individually : but when taken together, as we propose to do, the result is simply overwhelming.

(1) I believe the aforesaid truth, then, in the first place because Jesus Christ, who is the infinite Truth, not only (a) promised to give His very substance as the food of the world, but also because (b) on the solemn occasion when He drew His disciples around Him for the last time, at Supper, He actually fulfilled this promise. For, taking bread, He who is omnipotent as well as omniscient said : " This is my Body." And then, taking the wine : " This is my Blood." And having distributed among them the transubstantiated Bread and Wine, He commanded : " Do this "—that is to say, Do what I have done—" in remembrance of me."

Now observe, when He held the elements in His divine hand He did not say : " This is the figure, or the type, or the memorial of my Body," but simply and clearly : " This is my Body." And that is what we Catholics also say.

What is more, He was fully aware that they whom He addressed understood His words literally. In fact, the few who had doubted, and had exclaimed: "This saying is hard, and who shall bear it?" (John vi. 61), had already departed, and "walked no more with Him." Now, my dear brethren, it is surely enough for us to know with certainty that God has made an assertion, and that He meant it. We at once accept it, and demand no further proof of its truth. Yet no doctrine is more explicitly stated in Holy Scripture, so that they who affirm that we are mistaken or deceived, do but declare that God has deceived us, which it were blasphemy even to suggest.

(2) But, passing on a step further, we find that the infallible Church, which Christ founded and established here on earth for the express purpose of teaching us, and guarding us from all error, not only has treasured up His words, but has solemnly declared the literal meaning to be the only true meaning. The Church is God's mouthpiece; its special function is to teach us: "Go and teach all nations." We are distinctly commanded to listen and to obey, under pain of eternal damnation, as though Christ Himself were speaking: "Who heareth you, heareth Me." St. Paul tells us that she is "the pillar and ground of truth," against which, "the gates of hell (*i.e.* of error) shall never prevail." Now, she teaches, with the utmost clearness and authority, that Christ both said what He meant and meant what He said; and that, in the properly consecrated Host, the infinite and uncreated God,

in His human and divine nature, is verily present. How then can we hesitate ?

(3) Further : if we cast our eyes around, and travel back in spirit over the past centuries, we find that the whole of Christendom accepted and acted upon that doctrine. (a) The Popes and Bishops taught it throughout the length and breadth of the world ; (b) It was preached from thousands and thousands of pulpits, and in every known tongue, and for century after century ; (c) Learned professors in the theological seminaries, catechists in the elementary schools, missionarists in distant and barbaric lands handed down this wonderful doctrine from one generation to another. Renowned theologians explained, and proved this truth, in long and learned treatises, and (d) great doctors and saints and fathers of the Church commented upon it, and referred to it, in their voluminous writings, while some even composed beautiful hymns and spiritual canticles in its honour. In addition to this, the various liturgies and ceremonies, the processions and festivals, as well as (e) the daily Mass and Communions, kept the memory of this stupendous doctrine ever fresh and green before the faithful scattered throughout the entire world. In honour of so great a Gift, imposing cathedrals and majestic basilicas, as well as innumerable churches and chapels and chantries, sprang up all over the land. And priceless treasures and invaluable gifts were lavished on the sanctuaries and tabernacles which enclosed the Lord of Heaven and of earth.

“ I have worshipped in Canterbury and York ; in Winchester and Salisbury ; in Lincoln and Durham ; in Ely and in Wells,” writes the well-known dramatic critic, William Winter, in the *New York Tribune*. “ I have stood in Tintern, when the green grass and the white daisies were waving in the summer wind, and have looked upon those gray and russet walls and upon those lovely arched casements—among the most graceful ever devised by human art—round which the sheeted ivy droops, and through which the winds of heaven sing a perpetual requiem.

“ I have seen the shadows of heaven slowly gather and softly fall over the gaunt tower, the roofless nave, the giant pillars, and the shattered arcades of Fountain Abbey, in its sequestered and melancholy solitude, where ancient Ripon dreams, in the spacious and verdant valley of the Skell. I have mused upon Netley, and Kirkstall, and Newstead, and Balton, and Melrose and Dryburgh ; and at a midnight hour I have stood in the grim and gloomy chancel of St. Columbia’s Cathedral, remote in the storm-swept Hebrides, and looked upward to the cold stars, and heard the voices of the birds of night mingled with the desolate moaning of the sea.

“ With awe, with reverence, with many strange and wild thoughts, I have lingered and pondered in those haunted holy places ; but one remembrance was always present—the remembrance that it was the Roman Catholic Church that created those forms of beauty, and breathed into them the breath of a divine life, and hallowed them forever ;

and, thus thinking, I have felt the unspeakable pathos of her long exile from the temples that her passionate devotion prompted and her loving labour raised."

If the Catholics raised these magnificent temples and splendid monuments, it was only because they realised that they were building a Home for Jesus Christ Himself, where He might abide for ever with His faithful children. "My delights are to be with the children of men."

We can draw but one conclusion. Either the real presence of our Blessed Lord is a tremendous *fact*, or else Christianity, from its first inception, was utterly false, and steeped to the lips in idolatry. Than which nothing can be more absurd.

(4) Fourthly, we must call to mind another very significant fact ; namely, that those who were most conspicuous for holiness and purity of life were just precisely those whose devotion to this adorable Mystery was strongest and most ardent. Among the many millions of men and women living exemplary lives there have always been a certain select few, so especially renowned and so conspicuous and so raised above their fellows as to draw upon themselves the admiration of the world. They performed prodigies and worked wonders ; they cured the sick, and even raised the dead to life, so that all could see that they were chosen souls and favourites of Heaven, and that the Holy Spirit was dwelling in them in a very special way. We are referring to those whom the Church has canonised and raised to our altars, and set before us as the fairest

flowers of the human race ; the holiest and the most spiritually enlightened. We speak of such men as SS. Dominic, Francis, Bernard, Thomas of Aquin, Augustine, Gregory, Thomas of Canterbury, Norbert, Xavier, Ignatius, Vincent of Paul, and innumerable others whom it would be tedious to mention. Their lives have been carefully studied and thoroughly enquired into, and the Church, by a solemn decree, has pronounced them to be saints. Now, what was their belief in the Blessed Sacrament ? The truth is, they not only professed the doctrine, but they gloried in it. It was the acknowledged centre and source of their spiritual life. None showed so great a reverence for the Sacrament of the altar. None received it with such profound faith and humility. None realised so keenly the nearness of the Divine Guest, or knelt so frequently in His sacramental presence. So great indeed was the profound reverence of some among the saints, that they could not be persuaded to take Holy Orders. Neither St. Benedict nor St. Francis of Assisi, for instance, could ever be persuaded to accept the awful dignity and responsibility of the priesthood.

Are these all mistaken and deluded ? Are the very greatest of the saints less able than sinners and heretics to discriminate between what is human and what is divine ? between what is the institution of Christ and what is the invention of the devil ? Are these favoured souls, who are so brightly illuminated by the Holy Ghost, alone unable to see ? And are we compelled, after all, to confess that they who were adorned by every virtue, and filled with every

grace, were mere "bread-worshippers and idolaters"? And shall we turn away from them to seek instruction of worldly-minded and sensual men, who have no savour of the things of God? To do so were, surely, to qualify for a lunatic asylum.

(5) In the fifth place, bear in mind that the doctrine of the Real Presence has been confirmed by innumerable miracles. We might occupy the whole time now at our disposal, narrating, one after the other, the marvels that have been wrought by means of the Blessed Sacrament. We might mention many saints who have received the Body of their Lord by the ministry of angels; and others to whom our Lord has actually shown Himself in the sacred Host, but it would take too long; we can only recommend you to study their lives, and to look up these passages for yourselves, since such well authenticated instances help to confirm and to stir up our faith.

(6) In the sixth place, it must never be forgotten that the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence was never so much as publicly denied or called into question by any Christian, till Berengarius arose, in the eleventh century, and had the hardihood to challenge its truth. For a thousand years it had been accepted by all Christendom. For a thousand years it was in possession, and acknowledged by all, whether lay or cleric, whether learned or simple, whether rich or poor. If, then, the doctrine be not true, the whole of Christendom must have been corrupt from the very beginning. Instead of religion being purest at the source, and the more

nearly it is found to its divine Founder, it must have been, at that very period, most impure and furthest from the truth.

Further, if Christ be not really present in the Blessed Sacrament, then instead of receiving the truths of Revelation from saintly Bishops and martyred Popes, we should have been better advised to have applied to apostate friars and adulterous kings, and venal courtiers and princes.

In short, the denial of this great central dogma would bring us into close relationship with some of the worst of our race, whose lives would have disgraced any religion whatsoever.

(7) Seventhly, we have but to consider the character and the infamous lives of the chief and most notorious opponents of this doctrine, in order to judge of the value of their opposition. Were they men of solid piety, humble, devout, and zealous for the things of God ? Were they men whom we could look up to, and respect and admire ? Quite the contrary. They were, for the most part, self-willed, proud, insubordinate, and in many cases impure and evil-livers. Now, God does not reveal His will to the world by the lips of unauthorised men ; nor does He introduce radical changes, and entirely reverse the teaching of His Church for over a thousand years. On the contrary, He especially warns us, by the lips of St. Paul, to give no heed to such novelties. Addressing the Galatians, he writes : " There are some that trouble, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ, but though an angel from heaven preach to you a Gospel other than that

which we have preached, let him be anathema " (Gal. i. 8). We must not waste time listening to their purely human objections ; nor should we have any patience with the founders of new religions, who refuse to accept any truth that chances to appear unreasonable to them, or above their comprehension.

(8) And this brings us to our eighth point. If we seek to enquire why the doctrine of the Real Presence is denied by non-Catholics generally, we find that it is not because it is not clearly stated and taught in the pages of Holy Writ, nor because it was not promulgated from the very beginning, but simply on account of its mysteriousness. It involves such wonders ; it seems so extraordinary, so impossible. It troubles and confounds poor human reason, and opens out depths that no human mind can fully fathom. And to our opponents this is taken as a legitimate objection.

Of course we are the first to admit that the doctrine is incomprehensible and mysterious. But what of that ? Are we justified in refusing to credit the Word of God because He reveals a truth beyond and above our limited capacity ? What ! Is our poor faltering intellect to be made the measure of all truth ? Is there nothing certain, nothing true, but what we have tested for ourselves ? Mystery ? Mystery ? Why ; mystery is all around us, and about us, and within us. What is life itself ? What is memory, sensation, feeling ? Who will undertake to give an exhaustive explanation of these things ? Who understands the circulation of the blood, the

mystery of birth, the phenomenon of light, of electricity, and the rest ? Who ? *No one*. And are we, who cannot explain nor understand even our own wondrous existence, going to refuse all belief in the Real Presence, just because we cannot explain the "how" and the "why" of this stupendous "Mystery of Faith" ? Oh, alas ! If we accept God's word only so far as we can test its truth for ourselves, we pay Him but a sorry compliment. To trust Him so far only is not to trust Him at all. That is to trust only our own fallible and bungling reason. It is to act on sight, not on faith.

Surely we should show ourselves more loyal than that. So far from imitating the unbelieving Jews, who exclaimed, one to the other, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat ?" we must rather emulate the example of the faithful Apostles, and cry out, nothing doubting, "We believe, Lord, for Thou hast the words of Eternal Life." We know that "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John vi. 70,) and that what Thou sayest is true.

These, dear brethren, are some of the thoughts we should ponder over, to revive our faith, and to fill us with a deeper sense of God's infinite love and generosity.

It is true that it is impossible to see our Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. It is true that there is nothing whatever in the consecrated Bread and Wine to even suggest His adorable Presence, or to appeal to our senses, in any way ; yet, this notwithstanding, we are more certain and positive that He is indeed there than if we could actually behold

Him with our corporal eyes. For, after all, the senses may sometimes deceive us, but the infallible oracle of God, the Church, never ! “ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God’s words shall never pass away ” (Luke xxi. 33).

#### RESOLUTION.

Think more frequently of this marvellous Gift of God, and resolve to show an ever increasing gratitude and love towards the Provider of so celestial a Banquet.

# EARTH'S GREATEST TREASURE

## CORPUS CHRISTI

“There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not.”—St. John I. 26.

**T**HIS is indeed, and in very truth, a glorious day, for we are celebrating and commemorating the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, the most sublime and the most consoling of all the mysteries of our holy Faith.

To-day, the entire Church, spread through the world, rejoices and lifts up her myriad voices to heaven, in fervent thanksgiving to God. If, my dear brethren, it were possible to take the whole earth, and stretch it out before us like a map, and if we could gaze at the various kingdoms and empires scattered over its wide surface, we would be startled by the truly marvellous and soul-stirring spectacle that would meet our gaze. For, everywhere we looked, we would behold the faithful gathering together to do honour to their Sacramental King. In the magnificent basilicas and stately cathedrals, as well as in the thousands of churches and chapels of Italy and Spain, of France and Austria and Hungary, and other countries, we would watch the multitudes streaming in to assist at the Holy Sacrifice offered up with all the splendour and beauty of the Catholic ritual.

Under brighter and sunnier skies than we can boast of, vast processions are forming, and our Divine Lord is being carried through crowded streets and spacious avenues and squares, as well as through quiet grassy paths and leafy country lanes. Had we eyes to see at so great a distance, we might follow Him on His triumphant march, and watch the monstrance borne up aloft, in the hands of Bishop or Priest, amid the swaying of banners, the swinging of censers, and the joyous hymns of choristers. Lamps and candles are brightly burning around Him, and earth's fairest flowers are strewn along His path, while devout worshippers reverently uncover and kneel down, in lowly adoration, as He passes by.

Not in Europe alone is such a sight to be witnessed, but in the United States, in Canada, and in South America, and even in yet more distant Australia, New Zealand, and Tasmania—in short, in every part of the globe, wherever the Church of God has secured a footing: From the entire world a great chorus of praise and jubilee arises before the Throne of God. It is the shout of gratitude and of thanksgiving issuing from millions upon millions of loving Catholic hearts, offered to Jesus Christ for the greatest of His gifts.

And, as we gaze in rapture at this glorious spectacle, our thoughts travel back, right across the centuries, to that little room, that "upper chamber" in Jerusalem, where Jesus, the very night before He suffered the ignominious death of the Cross at the cruel hands of His own creatures, took bread, and

blessed and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying : " This is My Body," and then : " Do this in memory of Me."

Simple words, my brethren, but pregnant with deepest meaning ! Simple words, but the words of God Incarnate, and therefore all-powerful and irresistible, bearing down all opposition and sweeping aside every obstacle.

It is true that the world, at the time, heeded them not, considered them of no importance, yea, ridiculed them and treated them with scorn ; but being the words of God they are living words, and possess a charmed life, and cannot be gainsaid. The world, in its wickedness, did what it could to render them meaningless. It ruthlessly seized Him who had uttered them. Under the cloak of zeal, it even proceeded to murder Him on the heights of Calvary. It slew His apostles, it persecuted His disciples, while those who continued to proclaim His sovereignty and to acknowledge Him as God, it threw to the lions and tigers and other ferocious wild beasts, in the public arena, to be torn to pieces. In short, it did all that human hate and cruelty and vindictiveness could devise to damage His reputation, to destroy His influence, and to blot out His very memory from among men.

But all in vain. The world, with all its might and power and cunning, is no match for the despised Galilean. The obscure " Son of the Carpenter " is more powerful than the whole world arrayed against Him. As well might the surging waves of the restless ocean hope to shatter the solid granite cliff,

as the world expect to stay the divine decree, once it has gone forth, or to tamper in any way with the pronouncements of God: "Heaven and earth may pass away, but My words shall never pass away."

In the fullness of His authority Christ has declared: "My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed." And behold, these words are taken up, and accepted, and recognised as true, by over two hundred and fifty millions of Christians throughout the world at the present day.

Like some miraculous seed, they have been carried to every corner of the known world, and have sprung up and produced fruit unto life everlasting. So that, in spite of its mysteriousness, there is not one among all these millions who does not know and believe and rejoice in the most tremendous doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ upon our altars.

Among the many beautiful doctrines proposed to our belief by the Catholic Church, there is not one that should be so dear to our hearts, for there is none that so reveals the boundless love of God to men, or that furnishes us with such a strong and manifest proof of His ineffable goodness and condescension.

As there is nothing so consoling, so there is nothing so marvellous as God's love for us. Considering what we are and what we have done and are still doing to offend and insult Him, the wonder is that He should love us at all. But when we consider the immensity and the intensity of that love, our wonder knows no bounds. In fact, it is positively bewildering, and puzzles us more and

more, the more we think of it. Yet it is undeniable. Not only does God assure us of this love, and repeat the assurance again and again—and His simple assurance should be more than enough—but He proves it by startling deeds, and by the most unexpected acts. Let us dwell upon this point for a moment or two.

It was His indescribable love that brought the Eternal and the Infinite down from Heaven, and that clothed Him in the miserable rags of our humanity, and made Him, as it were, one of us. It was this same love that induced Him to suffer the ignominy of the Cross, and to shed the last drop of His precious Blood for our redemption. But who can fathom the bottomless depths of divine charity ? To die was not enough. To hang bleeding for three long hours in agony on the Cross was not enough. So boundless and so unparalleled a love was His, that He wished to do yet more. He wished to remain on with us, after His death, and to abide with us for ever, even to the end of time. So ardent was his yearning, that it would seem that He could not bring Himself to depart altogether from our midst. As a loving parent might address his children, He cries : “ I will not leave you orphans.” Quite the contrary : “ Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world.”

But how could He keep such a promise ? How could He, in His human and divine nature, remain with us, here on earth, to the end of time ? His little flock was destined to increase, and to fill the whole earth, and to spread to the four quarters of the

world. How, then, could He be with each one of us, at one and the same time, in the north and the south, in the east and the west?

It seemed impossible. To everyone but God it was impossible. But God is infinite in resources, and He can attain His ends by means which are open to no other. To Him nothing is impossible or difficult. Hence, in the exercise of His infinite power, He instituted the Blessed Sacrament. So that, wonderful to narrate, under the form of simple bread He dwells for ever upon our altars.

Can we actually see Him? No. Can we hear or feel or in any way detect the presence of His divinity? No. But this should not surprise us. When, well nigh two thousand years ago, He walked the earth, and conversed among men, no one ever looked upon or actually beheld His Godhead. When the shepherds from the hills, and the wise men from the east, knelt down beside His manger, they could see nothing but a tiny babe, nothing but a weak, fragile infant. There was nothing about Him to suggest the Creator of the universe. His dread power was hidden, so was His dazzling splendour, so was His infinite wisdom, goodness, beauty, and all His other divine attributes. But, in spite of this, He was as truly God as He was truly man, and as such He was worshipped and adored.

So, in a similar way even now, He hides His glory and His majesty in the Blessed Sacrament. But He does more, He hides also His human nature and attributes. We know He is there, but we know it by faith and by faith only. He is indeed what the

Holy Scriptures call "a hidden God." We cannot gaze upon His unveiled glory, nor contemplate the "Light inaccessible in which He dwells." Nor would that be possible, in our present state. We would be unable to bear such brightness. Bear it! Why, men cannot fix their eyes even on the material sun, as it shines in the heavens. Even when partially eclipsed they have to screen their eyes and look through smoked glasses or darkened spectacles, so that they may not be injured or blinded by its dazzling rays. But the sun itself is but darkness and obscurity when compared to the supernatural light of God's countenance. Did He disclose, I will not say the full blaze of His glorious presence, but even one tiny ray of it, its very splendour and intensity would speedily put an end to our life, and this would defeat the very purpose of the institution of the great Sacrament of the altar.

We cannot form the slightest conception, we never shall form any conception in this life, of the infinite treasure that we possess under the appearance of a particle of bread. We pass from the open street—from the noise and clatter of trams and omnibuses and of hurrying feet—into the silence and the solitude of some wayside chapel. The little flickering lamp tells us that God is there. But He gives no sign. Our senses cannot detect His nearness. We are wholly unconscious of the myriads of angels and blessed spirits that prostrate before His throne. We see not that dread majesty before which the strong pillars of Heaven tremble, nor the unapproachable light in which He dwells. Our ears

are too heavy to hear the swelling songs of the heavenly choirs, or even to catch the faintest echo of the measureless sea of voices breaking for ever and for ever against the steps of the great white throne, with its "Holy! Holy! Holy!" And, in the absence of all exterior manifestations of His presence, we are apt, if not to forget it, at least to pay but little heed to it.

We are distracted. We allow our thoughts to wander. We feel no awe, we experience no dread. We might almost be at home, or in the public street, or conversing with an equal, instead of speaking face to face with God. How differently should we act were it given to us to realise, even for a moment, the tremendous dignity and majesty of our hidden God. How fervently should we pray, how earnestly should we address ourselves to Him, and how deep would be our recollection.

I never read the account of the prophet Daniel's interview with the Archangel Gabriel, and his humble attitude of reverence and awe, without contrasting it with our own careless manner of acting when addressing our prayers to God, and without wondering at our extraordinary insensibility. Let me recall the incident, as it may be of some help to us, and enable us to realise better the respect that is due to Him who is the Creator both of angels and of men.

Bear in mind that Daniel was no ordinary man, but a man of exceptional piety and holiness. He was a great prophet and wonder-worker, and a trusty servant of God. Further, he was a man of boundless courage. He looked the whole world in

the face and feared not any human being, however powerful. As an instance of his boldness and fearlessness, let me remind you that when King Darius and his council forbade him to worship the God of the Jews, and threatened him with death if he did not comply, he paid no more attention to them than to the passing breeze, and readily submitted to be thrown to the hungry lions, rather than break the law of the Most High (chapter vi.). Such was the character of Daniel. Now take this noble character, who stood up before mighty kings and potentates, utterly fearless, this man of iron, whom no threat or menace could terrify, and place him in presence, I will not say of God, but of one of God's celestial messengers, of one of the angelical host that await His orders; and then weigh the difference of his whole aspect and bearing.

The inspired narrative informs us that one day, when the prophet was standing beside the great river Tigris, God sent His archangel Gabriel to deliver a message to him. He came, not to threaten nor to punish, nor to do him any evil, but simply to teach him what things should befall his people in the latter days (x. 14). Yet, the mere visible presence of this angel filled Daniel with the most paralysing fear. Had Daniel been a great sinner, had he committed some terrible crime, his alarm would be intelligible, but he was a "man of God," and a great saint; yet he is thrown into a state of indescribable terror. So terrified was he at the sight of the angel that he shook like an aspen leaf, and stood like one dumb, and unable to utter a single word.

Though the angel took a human form, yet the prophet tells us that "his body was like the chrysolite, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as burning lamps . . . and that when he spoke his voice was like the voice of a vast multitude" (x. 6). Consequently Daniel, in spite of his usual fearlessness, cowered down before God's messenger. "There remained no strength in me," the Prophet himself tells us, "and I fainted away, retaining no power to stir. And, when I heard the angel speak, I fell prone upon my face, in consternation, and buried my head in the ground." Nor was this all. He goes on to tell us that "the very joints of my body were loosened, and all my courage departed from me."

Now, my dear brethren, what I wish you to ask yourselves is this : If such was the mental condition of a renowned prophet, in presence of a mere servant of God, what would be our condition of mind if the infinite God were to manifest Himself to us, in all His uncreated glory, in the Blessed Sacrament ?

Who, after all, is Gabriel ? He is but a creature, one of the attendants of the Most High. He is but one among the countless myriads of blessed spirits who prostrate before Him day and night, waiting to do His bidding.

What is the highest angel, when compared to God ? Nothing. If, then, the sight of an angel can inspire such alarm, and can plunge even the bravest of the saints into a veritable sea of terror, great enough to deprive him of his speech, to paralyse all his faculties, and to loosen all his joints, what would be the effect

of the sight of God Himself, did He appear to us in all His inconceivable majesty and glory ? Oh ! we have no conception whatever of the infinite power, majesty, splendour, that lies hidden beneath the small white consecrated Host that the priest holds between his finger and thumb, and which the faithful receive, often so thoughtlessly, often so distractedly, into their hearts.

Did not Almighty God wrap an impenetrable veil around Him, did He not conceal Himself beneath the appearances of the Sacrament, no one could dare to approach Him, still less receive Him and unite himself with Him.

If a single angel can terrify the beholder, what would a thousand angels do ? Yet God is immeasurably more terrible, and more powerful, and more irresistible than the whole of the angelic host, that no man can number. In fact, the whole creation is nothing in His sight.

But, my dear brethren, if, on the one hand, God hides His glory in the Sacred Host, in order to give us confidence and to win our love, we, on the other hand, are bound in duty to remember what our Faith tells us concerning Him. If the eyes of our body are fast closed then we must open the eyes of our soul, and strive to realise the inconceivably great treasure that we possess in the Holy Eucharist. Nothing will so help us to a worthy reception of the Blessed Sacrament as a vivid sense of all that it contains. The more we come to realise the dazzling purity, the incomparable beauty, the infinite goodness and sanctity, of Him whom we actually embrace

and draw to ourselves in Holy Communion, the more humble, recollected, fervent, and devout shall we be when we approach the altar rails.

Alas ! Alas ! We are far too inclined to judge by outward appearances. We live habitually under the dominion of the senses. If God would allow only one little ray of His glory to appear, if He were to give us but a momentary glimpse of His adorable countenance, it would rivet our attention at once, and throw us into an attitude of the most profound humility and devotion. This, however, is not only impracticable, but, observe, it would likewise do away with all the merit of faith. And it is by the exercise of this great virtue that we render such homage to God. "Because you have seen," said our Lord to St. Thomas, "you have believed. Blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed." Did God disclose all His beauty to us in the Blessed Sacrament, it would put an end to our term of trial ; we should be already in heaven, for what, after all, is heaven, but where God manifests Himself, and allows us to see Him "as He is" ?

At present, the apostle reminds us, "we see through a glass, in a dark manner," and only hereafter, "face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). So long as we are on earth we have to trust to the infallible words of Christ and to the teaching of His Church, "whereunto," as St. Peter reminds us, "we do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the day star arises in our hearts" (2 St. Peter, i. 19). That is to say, we must listen to the Church, which is the light that God

has set in our midst, in this dark world, not for all eternity, but only "until the day dawns," that is to say, until the bright Day of Eternity breaks, and all mysteries and all obscurities will be revealed and made clear in the supernatural light of God's all-illuminating countenance. "In Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 10).

But, to turn to the most practical point of all, let us ask ourselves this question : Possessing this inestimable treasure so fully within our reach, do we make the use of it that we might and that we ought ? How often do we take the trouble to come and visit our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament ? He waits throughout the long, weary hours of the day and night, ready to receive our prayers, to grant our petitions and to console us, and to fill us with His grace. We know it is the self-same Jesus who cured the sick, who called the dead to life, who cast out demons, and who forgave sins. We know that He is as powerful now as then, and just as full of love for each one of us. Then, why does His presence not prove a greater attraction ? Why is the Blessed Sacrament not a more powerful magnet to draw us to His feet ? It is because, while we truly believe, we do not realise our own belief, nor understand all that it means. Stir up your faith, and you will grow fully sensible of the attraction, and, like saints, you will love to spend many hours of the day, and perhaps of the night, prostrate before Him. Remember that life is growing shorter, and the years fewer, and that the end is rapidly approaching, and then—whether we like it or no—we shall find our-

selves standing before Him, as our Judge, and trembling far more intensely, and with far greater reason, than Daniel before the angel. Why do we not prepare for that solemn interview by coming more frequently into His Sacramental Presence, and asking His grace and help ?

And our Communions ? What about them ? Do we realise, do we even *try* to realise all that a good Communion means ? How it strengthens us, how it encourages us ? How it diminishes the fires of concupiscence, checks the violence of temptation, restrains the power of the devils, stiffens our will, and even washes away imperfections and venial faults ? If we fully appreciated these and countless other facts, we could not possibly remain as cold as we do. We would thirst for the Blessed Sacrament as the hart thirsts after the running waters. Who, indeed, would be able to keep us from the altar rails ? Instead of it being necessary for our Holy Father to urge us to go often, and to do his utmost to revive the practice of even daily Communion, he would rather have to restrain us, and to check our zeal.

Let us follow the advice of the apostle, and " stir up the grace that is in us," and resolve, while there is yet time, to show a far greater love and esteem for this stupendous gift of God. Or else, when it is all too late, we shall have much to regret, and much to reproach ourselves with. Let us listen to the grave words of Pope Pius X., and take his invitation as addressed, not to the world in general, but to ourselves in particular. And what a wonderful, what a sublime invitation it is ! We are invited

to unite ourselves with Him who is infinite purity, infinite sanctity, and infinite love ; to unite our soul with His soul, in a most tender and affectionate embrace ; to place our lips, as it were, to His sacred wounds, and to drink His precious and life-giving Blood ; to nourish ourselves on His divine Flesh. In short, to live, spiritually, by Him, according to the words, " Who eateth Me, the same shall live by Me " (John vi. 58). For, " My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed " (56). The Holy Eucharist is both " meat " and " drink," inasmuch as it does for the soul, and for the spiritual life, that which material meat and drink do for the body and for its physical life. That is to say, Christ's sacred Body sustains our spiritual life, it makes us vigorous and capable of fighting and overcoming our spiritual enemies, and above all else, it unites us more closely with Jesus Christ, and gives us a pledge of a future glorious resurrection. " He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day " (John vi. 55).

There is no need to say more. If these words of Christ move you not, then nothing that any preacher can say ever will. May He who uttered them give you light to know and grace to do, and then you will be blessed indeed.

#### RESOLUTION.

Resolve to prove your appreciation of this Royal Gift by making a more generous use of it ; and by beseeching God to enable you to realise still more vividly all that it means.

## THE REAL PRESENCE

“He that is of God heareth the words of God.”

—John viii. 47.

**T**HIS England of ours, which has now become the battlefield of a hundred different contending sects, was once Catholic from shore to shore. For over a thousand eventful years the entire population of this island acknowledged the Pope's supreme authority in spiritual matters, and were closely united together in the self-same Faith. Though there were many cathedrals and churches and abbeys scattered all over the land, yet one and all were dedicated to the service of the self-same religion. So that on a Sunday morning, when the joyous bells rang out from a thousand turrets and steeples, and sent their glad summons reverberating over country and town, the prince and the peasant, the servant and the sovereign would kneel before one common altar, listen to the same doctrine, and assist at the same adorable Sacrifice of the Mass. This went on without any noticeable interruption for ten long centuries and more.

Then there came a change. In the sixteenth century a violent storm passed over the country, and hell itself seemed to have been let loose. The old religion was proscribed and assailed. “The noblest heads rolled on the block,” and anyone who dared

to call himself a Catholic became thereby guilty of high treason and was liable to be tortured, disembowelled, and hanged.

Not by moral means, not by persuasion, not by fair reasoning, but by such arguments as the dungeon, rack, fire, and sword, the masses of the people were terrorised into submission. Thus, by degrees, the old Faith was almost destroyed throughout the land. Just as the savage executioners would cut down the martyrs from the gallows, while they were yet writhing in agony, and tear out their still palpitating hearts, so Henry and Elizabeth and their base myrmidons tore out the Faith which had been the very heart and source of spiritual life in England for ten eventful centuries, and left the country spiritually dead.

What is the consequence ? The consequence is that England to-day is no longer Catholic. In fact, it is not of any one special creed, but is composed of a conglomeration of some hundred different and contradictory creeds. There are Methodists, Calvinists, Salvationists, Unitarians, and Anglicans, and Presbyterians and so forth ; and many of these, in their turn, are divided again, as is, for instance, the Anglican, as by law established, with its High Church, and its Low Church, and its Broad Church, and the rest.

The result is that, though the one Catholic Church spread throughout the world is more numerous than all the sects of Protestants put together, yet we Catholics are but a small minority *in this land*. We are living in an heretical region, and moving among

non-Catholics and unbelievers, and breathing a tainted and poisonous atmosphere. And what is more, unless we are watchful and constantly on our guard, we shall gradually, and, maybe, even imperceptibly, become influenced by our surroundings and unfortunate environment.

Hence, if this thoroughly un-Catholic atmosphere is to do us no harm, it will be only by reason of our striving to counteract its insidious influence, by keeping our faith constantly exercised. For it is in the spiritual order as it is in the natural and material order. We are influenced by the atmosphere in which we live.

If we take even the sharpest sword, of highly tempered steel, and hang it up, exposed to the moist atmosphere, it very soon deteriorates. First it loses its brilliancy and grows dull. Then the rust settles upon it. After a while it corrodes it, and eats it away. Finally it loses all its worth, and we have no choice but to throw it away—cast it on the scrap-heap. Something analogous in the supernatural order may be observed in the case of many once zealous Catholics. Exposed to the slow but steady and continuous influence of the heretical atmosphere in which their lives are passed, they are sure, unless very careful, to lose, if not their faith, at least that keen appreciation and strong esteem of spiritual things, which is a loss for which nothing can compensate.

Hence, we should be at some pains to counteract the effects of our environment. We should often ponder over the motives of our belief, and make use

of such considerations as may help to render our faith more vivid and more intense.

As an illustration of what is meant, let us take that most central doctrine of all, the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, under the form of bread and wine.

What a marvellous dogma it is ! How it seems to bring heaven itself down to earth, and to place God Himself within our reach. How it exalts and extols our religion. How profound is this mystery ! How incomprehensible and inexplicable, yet how ravishingly beautiful and consoling and joy-yielding !

What a magnificent act of faith we make when we lovingly acknowledge it ! In revealing this doctrine to us, it really seems almost as though God wished to test our belief to the utmost, and to see how far we are ready to accept His word.

When He first broached it to the Jews of old, they could not bring themselves to accept it, though He spoke with the utmost clearness. "The Bread that I shall give," said Christ, "is My Flesh, for the life of the world" (John vi. 52). "The Jews thereupon strove among themselves, saying : How can this man give us his flesh to eat ?" They refused to submit their intellects even to the authority of God. They trusted their senses more than they trusted the express words of the Infinitely Wise. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat ?" How ? That was surely His affair. Is He not omnipotent ? Cannot He do "all, whatsoever He willeth" ? Is anything impossible or difficult to Him ? It is enough that He tells us, and with

added emphasis : " My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed."

But the perverse and carnal-minded Jews, like so many Protestants of to-day, would not listen to it. They refused to acknowledge the veracity of God Incarnate. " This saying is hard," they exclaimed, " and who can hear it ? " Sooner than set aside their own fallible judgment and submit to the Divine Master, they rejected His doctrine, and " went back, and walked no more with Him."

These faithless souls were the forerunners and types of the heretics of to-day. In St. Peter and the apostles, on the other hand, we contemplate the attitude of the one true Church. " Jesus said to the twelve : Will you also go away ? " Then Peter, answering in the name of the rest of the apostles, cried out : " Lord ! to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Now, we may here observe that long before this our Lord had laid down the principle : " He that is of God heareth the words of God " (John viii. 47).

The Jews of old refused to hear His words. They weighed them in the balance of their own carnal minds, and they found them difficult, obscure, and hard to accept, so they rejected them and " heard not the words of God because they were not of God."

So is it with the great mass of Protestants. They admit that these words quoted were actually uttered. They print them in their Bibles, they read them at their services, but they explain them away. They tell us that we must not accept them literally.

They must not be taken as they stand. Our Lord was but using figurative language. The bread was to be merely a memorial, a sign, a figure. Even though our Lord, as it were, in very anticipation of this, says the exact opposite: "My Flesh is meat *indeed*, and my Blood is drink *indeed*," they contradict Him and assure us that His Flesh is *not* "meat indeed," but only in figure, and His Blood is drink, *not* "indeed," but only a commemoration.

In short, they represent our Lord as deliberately deceiving His hearers.

And I do not make this charge lightly. Indeed, it admits of easy proof. For observe: He sees, and of course knows, that the Jews are taking His words literally. This is proved by the remarks they make: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" It was a real difficulty to them—a stumbling block; and that could not have been the case had the words been accepted figuratively. If you take the words figuratively, then the difficulty disappears, and there is no ground for their objections whatever. They would have been meaningless. Besides, would they have treated the matter so seriously; would they refuse to walk any more with Him; would they turn their backs on Him if He had meant nothing more than that they were to eat a little bread in His memory, or drink the chalice in commemoration of Him? Just imagine them exclaiming to one another: "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" There is nothing hard in taking a simple piece of bread, or drinking a little wine; nothing so terribly difficult and impossible as to

induce them to ask: "Who shall hear it?" or who shall credit it? No. They found the words difficult and hard to accept, precisely because they knew that our Lord meant what He said, and intended His words to be taken in their ordinary and obvious sense. In fact, their conduct is inexplicable and inconceivable on any other ground.

Further, we must bear in mind that our Lord was the tenderest, gentlest, and most considerate of teachers. Hence, if He intended His words to be taken figuratively, He would not, and, as a matter of fact, in justice He could not, have allowed these Jews to leave Him and to be driven off on a mere misunderstanding. As soon as He heard them making a difficulty out of it, and asking: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" it was obviously His duty to have said: "Be not troubled. You must not take Me literally. You have put a wrong construction on My words." And when He saw them moving off, and refusing to walk any longer with Him, on account of this mistake, He was in duty bound to explain, and to say: "Come back, come back; I do not mean that My Flesh is really and truly meat, to be taken and swallowed as you imagine, but I am using a figure of speech and speaking only spiritually."

He would certainly have said this, if what so many non-Catholics teach were true; but He did not. Quite the contrary. He would offer no further explanation, for they had understood Him quite correctly. He only repeated His doctrine more emphatically and more clearly than before:

“ My Flesh is meat indeed, my Blood is drink indeed,” and ; “ Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you ” (John vi.).

The Catholic Church accepts whole-heartedly the teaching of Christ, and makes no attempts to explain it away. While the sects around her say that Jesus Christ is present only in figure, and that His Presence is only a spiritual and not a real or substantial presence, and that His Flesh is not really received as the nourishment of the soul, and is not “ meat indeed,” the Catholic Church does but repeat the words of the Divine Founder, and does but declare His Flesh to be “ meat indeed, and His Blood to be drink indeed.”

This is the grand homage that every true Catholic pays to the veracity of God. To believe Him in matters which we see to be true, or which we can readily understand, is a very-slight compliment. To trust Him only so far as we can test the truth for ourselves, and only so far as our intellect approves the doctrine He proposes, is in reality not to trust Him at all. Yet this is what we find in those who reject Transubstantiation and the Real Presence. They seem to say to God Incarnate : “ I believe You are God, and I believe what You say, but only provided it seems reasonable to me. I accept Your doctrine provided You do not ask too much. But really, to admit that I can actually receive the very Flesh of Christ, or rather the whole of His sacred Body and Blood and Soul and Divinity, under the form of a particle of bread, is too much. I really

must draw the line there. No, no ; I cannot bring myself to go those lengths, even though You, who are God, ask it of me."

Contrast that hesitating, suspicious distrustful spirit with the spirit that actuates a child of the true Church. His confidence is whole-hearted. He puts no limits to the veracity of God—no, none whatever. Though this dogma is a most tremendous test of his faith, he never falters ; on the contrary, he rejoices to have such an opportunity of testifying his loyalty and his boundless trust. He is the first to admit its difficulty, and to exclaim : " Oh, what a mystery ! How entirely above my reason ! How wholly inexplicable and incomprehensible ! In this doctrine my senses, my imagination, my personal experience are all drawing me to an opposite conclusion. Yet I know Christ's sole word is more reliable than anything else." He cries out : " My reason cannot understand it ; my imagination cannot conceive it ; my senses are all opposed to it. Yet, O infinite God, though the difficulties were a thousand times stronger, what is their weight against Thy word ? Thy assurance, Thy divine authority is above all. *Credo !* I believe. I accept. I acknowledge. Lord ! if I trust not Thee, then whom shall I trust ? Lord ! to whom else shall I go ? . Thou hast the words of eternal life. Thou art all powerful ; Thou canst do all things. There is but one thing Thou canst not do. There is but one thing impossible to Omnipotence, and that is to deceive those who trust Thee, and to assert the thing that is not. Heaven and earth

shall pass away, but Thy word shall never pass away."

Our faith is strengthened still further by the fact that we are not left to ourselves to interpret the words of Christ. He not only spoke, He not only spoke clearly and simply ; He did more. He established a Church to be the guardian and the interpreter and the ever-living and infallible witness of the words recorded in the Bible, while at the same time He tells us that " no prophecy of Scripture is made by *private* interpretation " (2 Pet. i. 20). He also promised that He would remain with His Church forever, and lead her into all truth. St. Paul assures us that the Church is the " pillar and ground of truth "—then, surely, to be completely trusted. Now, the Church has from the beginning taught the real and substantial Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. For ten long centuries this was not only taught, but taught without one dissenting voice. Every Christian, throughout the entire world, believed it. It was the great central doctrine, around which all else gathered. The altar, the tabernacle, the Holy Sacrifice, the Communion, the Viaticum ; these formed the very essence and marrow of Catholic life. Indeed, it was not until the eleventh century that Berengarius of Tours arose and began to dispute and to question the truth of this doctrine. But his condemnation by the whole teaching body of the Church of that day served but to show how universally and how thoroughly the doctrine of to-day was held even then. It is well to remember, too, that Berengarius

himself lived long enough to repent of his error. After the Council of Bordeaux (1080), he retracted his heresy, retired into solitude in the island of St. Cosme, and died a few years later reconciled to the Church.

Thus, my brethen, of two things one : either we must declare that Christ has broken His promises, and allowed the Church to teach falsehood for fifteen hundred years—that is to say, until the Protestant Reformation discovered the true doctrine—which is equivalent to asserting that Christ is not God at all, but only an impostor, unable to perform what He most solemnly promises ; or else we must accept the interpretation that the Catholic Church has always given, and which asserts the real, substantial, and objective Presence of the Body and Blood, the Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, under the appearance of bread, and also under the appearance of wine.

We shall be still further convinced of the truth of this most inspiring and beautiful doctrine by considering the consequences which would have to be admitted if it were false. Let us be guilty of an absurdity, and grant, merely for the sake of argument, that the Low Church Protestants are right, and that there is nothing but common bread received by the communicant. If that were true, then we should have to confess, not merely that the Catholic Church is not the true Church, but that it has been teaching material idolatry and commanding all its subjects for the past two thousand years to worship bread, and to give divine honours to a piece of inanimate matter.

Nor is this all. We should be forced to acknowledge that this Church, with its appalling system of bread-worship and idolatry, had not only survived the vicissitudes of nineteen hundred years, but that she had produced all the great and glorious saints that she now honours in her calendars ; that this idolatrous soil had produced the spotless purity of the virgins, the constancy of the martyrs, the heroism of the confessors, the zeal and dauntless courage of the missionaries ; that it gave birth to countless religious Orders both of men and of women, and, furthermore (since the greater the saint, the greater usually was his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament), we would have to say that the worse their idolatry the more splendid the result, and the saintlier and holier their lives. Which is surely to reduce the statement to an absurdity—a veritable *reductio ad absurdum*. Nor is that all. If the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence were not true, we should have to confess that while God carefully hid His truth from the greatest saints for fifteen hundred years, yet He disclosed it for the first time to the Reformers in the sixteenth century. And that while scores of great saints like SS. Bernard, Dominic, Dunstan, Gregory, Augustine, the seraphic St. Francis, St. Thomas, known as the Angelic Doctor, as well as Anthony, Aloysius, Teresa, Clare, Agnes, Elizabeth, and thousands of others who reached heroic degrees of virtue, and whose lives were guaranteed as saintly by innumerable miracles and wonders, were in error and in ignorance upon such a vital and essential point, and that their persecutors and tyrants, many

of whom led infamous lives and were evil-doers, enjoyed the monopoly of divine truth. In short, before we could entertain the idea that the Catholic doctrine is wrong on this point, we would have to accept such a number of gross absurdities and impossibilities as would upset reason altogether. There are many other motives of credibility that might be brought forward, but time will not permit us to touch upon them. Fortunately, you, my brethren, stand in no need of them, since you are in full possession of the Faith, and, like your forefathers, you love to prove it and to manifest it by the sacrifices you are ready to make in order to beautify, enrich, and adorn the sanctuary where God dwells in the great Sacrament of His love. It is well to be imbued with the holy sentiments of the great king and prophet David, and to cry out with him: "I have loved, O God, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth." As he made great sacrifices to enrich and adorn the spot where God used sometimes to manifest His presence, how much more reason have we to exert ourselves and to do ourselves violence, if necessary, to render the Home of the Blessed Sacrament as little unworthy of God as we can make it.

#### RESOLUTION.

Let us do our best to cultivate a greater love for Jesus Christ, in the Holy Eucharist, and to intensify our faith in this adorable mystery.

## JESUS CHRIST: OUR MODEL OF HUMILITY

“ Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.”  
—Matt. xi. 29.

**G**OD the Son, the second Person of the most adorable Trinity, came down to earth, and clothed Himself in the rags of our humanity, not merely to die that we might live, not merely to suffer in time that we might rejoice throughout eternity ; but, likewise, that He might become our instructor, and teach us the way to heaven.

Now, there are two very different ways of teaching. First of all, there is the way of precept, and then there is the way of example. The way of precept is long and tedious and difficult and unattractive ; but the way of example is, by comparison, easy, sweet, short, and attractive. Hence, in His immense love, Jesus Christ determined to choose what to Him indeed was the more painful, but which to us is by far the easier way ; viz., the way of example : “ Learn of Me ; I am the way.”

Now, it must be here observed that the second Person of the adorable Trinity, considered in His divine nature, could be no example for us poor, lowly human creatures. No. As God, He is not merely above us, but infinitely above us, dwelling in light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen at any time,

True. Then how was He to become our example ? The answer is : By becoming man, without thereby ceasing to be God. So He became man, and, as man, He lived and conversed, and laboured and suffered, just as we do. Yes, as the apostle reminds us, " He resembled us in all things, excepting sin," being a member of the human race, born of an earthly mother, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone.

" Behold the man ! " cried Pilate, as he exhibited Jesus to the multitude from the balcony of the Pretorium. In a far different spirit does the Church repeat those words, century after century, to all her children : " Behold the man ! " behold the one absolutely perfect type, the highest ideal, the infinitely holy man.

As man, Jesus Christ becomes a perfect model to us, not of one virtue only, but of every virtue, for He is the source and overflowing fountain of all sanctity. ]

But, though He possessed every virtue in the highest degree, yet there was one in particular which was, to say the least, more strikingly exhibited by Him, and more conspicuous than the rest ; a virtue which shone with a more dazzling brilliancy and burnt with a brighter and a steadier flame than any other ; one which He seemed more anxious to manifest, and to impress upon us, than any other : and that virtue was humility. " Learn of Me," not to create the universe, not to command the tempest, but, " meekness and humility of heart." If then Jesus Christ came to teach us all virtues, it would seem that He came more especially to teach us humility.

As God, He could never be an example of humility ; for that is a virtue suitable indeed to a creature, but altogether out of place and impossible in the Creator. For what is humility but the practical recognition of one's personal nothingness, and of one's limitations and utter dependence. But God is the infinite, without limitations, and dependent upon none. Only as man could He practise this virtue—and this He did. In fact, there is perhaps nothing in His human life that is more admirable or more astounding than the manner and the measure in which He practised it upon every occasion.

Other virtues and qualities seemed quite natural and becoming in Him. Humility, on the contrary, seemed almost out of place. When we hear Him confounding the Pharisees and doctors of the law by a few simple words, we are not astonished, for we know that He is the uncreated Wisdom of the Father. When we see the winds and the waves obey Him, we feel this to be but natural, for the creature should naturally show its subjection to the Creator. So, too, when we watch him curing the sick, or calling the dead to life, we scarcely marvel, since we are well aware that He is the Lord of life and of death, and that none can resist Him. And so of all the other wonders that He wrought. But His profound humility ! Oh, my brethren, His humility startles and confounds and overwhelms us, and seems to take away our breath. Oh, what a marvel !

(1) That Omnipotence should assume the weakness of a babe, and should lie, in a state of helplessness, on a little straw in a manger.

(2) That the irresistible and the all-powerful, "by whom kings reign and the princes of the earth exercise their power," should fly an exile into Egypt, to escape death at the hands of Herod and his assassins, as though incapable of defending Himself from mere human malice.

(3) That He, whose will all obey, in heaven, in hell, and on earth, should Himself become obedient to Mary and Joseph, His own creatures, and live, for years, subject to them in Nazareth. Such a prodigy fills us with amazement. Oh, what a mystery of lowliness and condescension! Yet this is not all. As His passion draws near, we see Him drinking yet deeper of the bitter chalice.

(4) We behold the dread Sovereign, whose hands created the earth, and stretched forth the heavens, and whose mere presence constitutes the joy of the blessed, trodden under foot by infamous men. We see Him bare His back to the cruel scourge, bow his sacred head to receive the crown of sharp thorns, and offer His cheek to be defiled by the spittle of the brutal soldiery.

(5) Yes, we contemplate Him, whose loving providence watches over the very birds of the air and beasts of the field, and who gives food to all in due season, Himself hungry and thirsty, and without even a place whereon He could lay His head. "The birds have their nests and the foxes their holes, but the son of man hath not whereon to lay His head."

(6) We contemplate Him, who clothes the flowers of the field with beauty, and the trees of the forest

with verdure, stripped of His last garment, and hung in derision naked, like a felon, on the infamous gibbet of the Cross.

Ah yes ! It is such scenes, my dearly beloved brethren, that fill us with amazement and consternation, and which force us to ask : “ Why, O Lord, why this unheard-of humiliation ? Why this utter sacrifice of honour, dignity, reputation ? Why this profound self-abasement, this awful annihilation ? ”

The answer is not far to seek. It is, alas ! all owing to the innate pride and haughtiness and selfishness of man, which Christ came to conquer and to crush. It is because God beheld, as God alone can, the ruin and desolation and misery of which pride is the cause, the source, and the main-spring.

A. The first and the fairest of all creatures that had come forth from His divine hands had forfeited their exalted state, and had fallen through pride. Pride, in the beginning, had hurled angels and archangels from their heavenly seats, and had precipitated them into the bottomless abyss ! Instead of paying God homage on account of their great gifts, they took complacency in them, and acted as though they were the authors of their own being. Not content with their wonderful endowments and exalted position, they aspired to rise yet higher and be equal to God Himself. “ I will fix my throne,” exclaimed their leader, Satan, “ above the stars, and I shall become like to the Most High.” And what was the consequence ? God punished their

pride by withdrawing His support and co-operation, and the next thing we hear is : “ Behold ! I saw Lucifer, like lightning, falling from heaven.”

B. When the angels had failed, on account of their pride, and had, if we may so say, disappointed every hope, God created man, “ a little lower than the angels,” and blessed him, and surrounded him with His choicest favours, and set him over all the works of His hands. But even into his heart also pride soon gained an entrance, and robbed man of grace, and God of honour. Instead of being filled with intense gratitude for the good things bestowed upon them, and honouring and venerating their Benefactor, they sighed after yet greater honours and yet higher gifts. They listened to the lying tongue of the devil. His promise that, if only they would partake of the forbidden fruit, they would become as gods, aroused all their pride and ambition. They also aspired to an equality with God. At last, in defiance of the divine prohibition, they stretched forth their hands, and broke the law, and so became (not indeed like to God) but like to the fallen angels, to whose lying words they had foolishly lent too ready an ear.

C. And as pride was their ruin, so it has been the ruin of millions and millions ever since. What, indeed, is all sin, but an act of pride ? Every sin that has ever been committed from the beginning of time, every sin we ourselves have been guilty of during our past lives, whatever may be its special nature or its exact species, contains within it the element of pride. Let us select any sin we please,

and then ask ourselves: Did it not arise from a disregard of the sovereignty of God? Was it not caused solely by our preferring our own will to His? Undoubtedly. It was the putting ourselves in the first place, and God in the second place. In short, whenever we sin we refuse to acknowledge the authority of God. We openly declare our independence, and we repeat that rebellious cry, first heard on the lips of Satan: "*Non serviam*," I will not serve.

Hence, Jesus Christ, who clearly recognised pride to be the very tap-root and baneful source from which all sin takes its rise, resolved to impress upon us, in the most emphatic way, the necessity and priceless value of humility, by Himself becoming its most conspicuous model and exponent.

He preaches humility as a tiny babe, shivering in the cold, comfortless stable, for there is no room for Him in the inns of Bethlehem; He preaches it, obedient and docile, in the poor little home at Nazareth; He preaches it as He wends his weary way, on foot, through Palestine, with a few ignorant fishermen as His only companions; He preaches it in His scourging, in His carrying of the Cross; and more especially in his ignominious death on Calvary, between two thieves. In a word, His whole life, from start to finish, was one long lesson of humility, but one unbroken commentary and illustration of the words: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

If our loving Master has been at so much pains to teach, let us bestir ourselves, and show some

anxiety to learn. Let us frequently take that divine book, the Crucifix, between our hands, and fix our gaze on the mangled form of the Son of God, and study there this most beautiful, most necessary, and all-embracing virtue.

Why, you will ask, do I call it an "all-embracing" virtue? Well, my brethren, because, if we can only secure possession of humility, then all other virtues will follow in its train. It is a short and expeditious and most direct way to sanctity. As pride is at the root of every vice, so humility is at the root of every virtue. There is no time to prove this with regard to each. But we may take a few of the most prominent virtues by way of illustration, and show their intimate connection with humility.

Take faith, that virtue without which, the apostle tells us, it is "impossible to please God." What, after all, is faith? It is nothing else but humility—the humility of the intellect. It is the bowing down, the lowly prostration of our proud mind before the revelation of God. Thus God communicates to us some great and inscrutable truth; He opens out to us some profound mystery concerning Himself or His Church. We cannot fathom it, nor understand it, nor explain it. It is above and beyond the widest reaches of our small glimmer of a mind. Indeed, our intellect can no more illuminate and render visible and clear the infinite depths of God's nature, than a glow-worm's tiny spark can light up the dark and fathomless depths of ocean. Now, if we are proud, we shall

refuse to submit. We shall imitate the Jews, who, when our Lord taught them the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament, and promised that He would give them His Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink, asked : " How can this man give us his flesh to eat ? " and because they could not explain *how*, then went on to exclaim : " It is a hard saying, and who shall bear it ? " and finally left Him altogether, and walked with Him no more. On the other hand, if we are humble, we shall submit at once to the authority of God, and will cry out with St. Peter : " Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life." All heresy springs from pride. " If," says St. Augustine, " there were no pride, there would be no heresy." Thus faith is seen to be rooted in humility.

If you examine any other virtue you will find it has the same foundation. Let us take obedience. What is obedience ? It is also nothing else but humility, only in another form. If faith is humility of the intellect, so obedience is humility of the will. It is the forcing under our own will, and the doing, not what we are inclined to do, but what we are ordered to do ; not what seems right in our own eyes, but what God commands. It is the subjection of the human to the divine will. It is our will paying reverence to God's will, and admitting its inferiority. In short, the beautiful flower of obedience will grow nowhere else but in the soil of a lowly and humble heart.

Or consider yet another exquisite virtue, the virtue of brotherly love. Of all virtues, this is the special

one by which we are to be recognised as the disciples of Christ. "By this let all men know that you are my disciples, that you have love one for the other." Now reflect for a moment, and ask yourselves: Where shall we seek this charming, gentle, patient, fraternal love, except among the humble? For, surely, to love our neighbour aright is to consider him rather than ourselves; to consult his interests, to further his aims, to offer him our service and to be ready to put ourselves to some pain and inconvenience for his sake. It is to forget ourselves, that we may think of him: and, surely, that is to declare, only in a roundabout way, that we must be humble and lowly of heart.

Pride cannot bring itself to act in such a way. Pride is too much preoccupied with self, too much self-centred. The proud and ambitious man looks upon others merely as his tools. If they can serve his purpose he will not hesitate to make use of them; if not, he just brushes them aside. If he thinks they are in his way he will not scruple to trample on them. For pride pauses not to consider what is due to others, nor how they may suffer; it is egoistic, and considers only itself. So that, wherever the blight of pride falls, it invariably kills and withers up the virtue of brotherly love. On the other hand, where there is concord and peace and mutual agreement and fellow-feeling and happiness, there too we shall find humility. It is pride that sets people by the ears; that makes them sensitive, and exacting, and ever ready to take offence. The proud are easily put out, resent the least offence,

and are ever standing up for what they are pleased to call their "rights." The result is they are never content, never really happy.

Did time permit, we might pass on from the examination of one virtue to that of another till we had exhausted them all : and the same truth would be forced upon us in regard to each.

Having spoken of the extreme advantages and absolute necessity of humility, it may be well, in conclusion, to point out the chief means of obtaining possession of it.

1. The first is constant, earnest prayer. "If you ask the Father anything in My name He will give it to you."

2. The second is a careful consideration of the immense advantages enjoyed by the humble, as proved by many texts of Holy Scripture : *e.g.*, "Humility goeth before glory" (Prov. xv. 33) ; "God hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted the humble" (Luke i. 52) ; "The prayer of the humble shall pierce the clouds," and so forth.

3. The third powerful means is to be very courageous and constant in practising this virtue. To seek rather than to avoid humiliations, and to rejoice whenever such opportunities arise.

4. The fourth means is to keep the example of Jesus Christ, the infinitely holy, ever before our minds, and to consider His life of profound self-annihilation, which induced the prophet to describe the Eternal Son of God, made man for us, in inspired words, as : "A worm, and no man ; the reproach

of men, and the outcast of the people" (Ps. xxi. 7).

5. The fifth means is to weigh well in the balance of the sanctuary our innumerable offences, misdemeanours, and sins ; our weakness, cowardice, and worldliness ; our ingratitude, apathy, and sloth ; and our many other faults and failings. Such a study of our own personal misery should root up every remnant of pride and self-complacency from our hearts. Courage, then, for there is no doubt but that our advance will be in proportion to our earnestness and generosity in the struggle, and that every advance made in humility will be, at the same time, an advance in all the other virtues.

#### RESOLUTION.

Let us resolve to make a generous and constant use of these five means, so that we may advance rapidly and securely along the road of perfection.

## THE PRESENCE OF GOD

“I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect.”—Gen. xvii. 1.

“You are the temples of the living God.”—2 Cor. vi. 16.

**T**HAT we should be totally ignorant of a multitude of facts that in no way concern us is natural enough. Indeed, it is inevitable. But that we should remain in utter unconsciousness of facts that concern us very closely does seem at first sight somewhat strange. Yet so it is. There are important and even necessary processes going on within us, though we in no way advert to them: such as the process of digestion, assimilation, nutrition, the destruction of effete tissues, and the formation and building up of new cells. All these things take place without our having any direct knowledge of them. Then there are organs in our body, of great importance and use, which perform very necessary functions, without our in any way being sensible of the fact. Of many an organ indeed it might be said that we should not know that we possessed it, did it not occasionally get out of order and so cause us pain.

Further, we are subject to many influences that we wot not of; we are not occasionally but continuously the sport and the plaything of forces, of which

we are wholly unconscious, even while they are acting upon us. How many of the millions, now living in this world, I wonder (to take a single instance), realise that our home and dwelling place is a material ball, floating as free through space as a bubble floats through the air. How many of us, I do not say believe, for we all do that, but actually realise, that we and the great cities and countries we inhabit are being borne along through the heavens, without a moment's pause ; that, in fact, we are travelling through space faster than a leaden ball speeds from the mouth of a cannon—at the rate of more than a thousand miles in one minute ; that we have travelled over a distance of many thousand miles since you, dear Brethren, began to listen to my words. We know it to be a fact. It is proved by science. But millions do not know this ; and even of those who know it and accept it on authority, how many actually *realise* it ? Though they themselves are being borne on through space at this terrific breakneck speed, they imagine themselves to be at rest, and perfectly still. Thus many undeniable facts are not perceived nor adverted to.

I have referred to some of the phenomena relating to our natural life. These thoughts may seem extraneous to our subject, but I have introduced them that we may be better disposed to acknowledge that there are analogous phenomena also that concern our spiritual life, which we are equally likely to forget and to be unconscious of, to our great detriment and loss. We are unconscious of them, not because they are unreal, for they are most real,

nor because they do not affect us personally, for they do affect us most personally, but solely because they are so unobtrusive and so secret. The special fact which I wish to point out in this discourse, and which we so seldom call to mind, is the continuous and intimate and all-pervading presence of God within our very soul. I do not say we never think of God : no, all I wish to observe is that even when we do speak or think of Him our imagination is inclined to at once localise that Supreme Being. It places Him in some remote region, in some far-off heaven towards which we address our prayers. Now, what we have to try and bring home to ourselves, if we wish to make solid progress in virtue, is that God is close by us and intimately present within us ; our constant companion, and our ceaseless witness.

The right understanding of this dogma, and its constant remembrance, form so powerful and so admirable a means of sanctification, that I will take it as the special subject of the present sermon.

We will firstly consider what theologians teach upon this subject, and then we shall go on to show how we should apply the lessons they teach, and turn them to account.

God is an absolutely pure Spirit, an intelligence without any material organism or parts, indivisible, unextended, and immaterial. He is everywhere. No spot exists, whether in heaven, earth, or hell, which He does not occupy and fill. As He exists in all times, so he exists in all places.

To render the subject clearer to our minds, we

may consider that God is everywhere in three different ways. He is everywhere,

(1) By His knowledge.

(2) By His power.

(3) By His very essence.

I. God is everywhere by His knowledge. That is to say, He knows all things. Nothing can escape His all-vigilant eye. He observes, necessarily, clearly, minutely, and without effort, every motion of my heart, every desire, every aspiration of my soul. No thought can form even within the most secret recess of my being, but He sees it ; no passing emotion of joy or of sorrow, of pity or of pain, can pass like a ripple over the surface of my soul, but He has witnessed it. So absolutely close and intimate indeed is God's presence, and so unutterably perfect is His knowledge, that under no other conceivable hypothesis could it be any more perfect or exhaustive than it is. God watches over all as over each, and over each as over all. And nothing can exceed the accuracy and the exactness and the minuteness of His vision. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that God were to withdraw His attention wholly from every other creature, and to focus and concentrate the whole of His infinite mind upon me, and upon me alone. Would the perfection of His knowledge of me and my feelings and thoughts have increased in accuracy or precision or in any other way? Evidently not. The suggestion is an impossible one. For His present knowledge of me is absolutely exhaustive, and wholly incapable of increase. What an aid the

remembrance of this fact ought to be to us. How can we offend in the very presence of God, and with the consciousness that His gaze is riveted full upon us ?

II. But God is everywhere, not merely by His knowledge, but also by His power. He must be very near indeed then to me, since He is ever assisting me, and co-operating with me in all I do, and, as it were, incessantly pouring fresh life into me, as the rivers pour water into the sea.

Let us try and grasp this momentous truth somewhat more exactly. There was a time, not so very long ago, when I had no existence. Then God, by His creative act, drew me into being. I thus owe my existence to Him. That I now am, is a result of His act. But, observe, God does not create a man as an artist carves a statue. An artist may display much labour and skill in fashioning the statue, but, once made, he rests from his labours and exerts himself no more. Once the object is produced and completed he can leave it and need think of it no more, and the statue or image will continue to stand of itself without any further attention on the part of its fashioner.

God is no artist in that sense. He cannot disengage Himself from the works of His hands. He cannot make a creature and then withdraw and leave the creature to stand alone. He not merely does not, but He cannot render the creature independent of Himself. No creature can ever be self-sufficing and independent of God. If God makes me, and if He intends me to continue enjoying the

life He has bestowed, it is essential that He continue with me, support me, and keep me in being. Just as the shadow of a substance cannot endure unless the substance be present to cast the shadow, so neither can I endure unless God be present, imparting life. That I am here is, of itself, proof enough that God is here ; for I could not be here unless He were here sustaining me and upholding me. What would happen did God withdraw His hand for one moment ? That same moment I would cease to be : I would go out as the electric light when you cut the wires. Instantly I would return to the state of original nothingness, from which God, in His infinite mercy, has called me. This absolute dependence on God is a stupendous truth, but how few of us are at all sensible of it. A simple illustration may help to bring it home. You have seen a picture painted on canvas, an oil painting by some great artist. You have also seen a picture thrown on a white sheet by a magic lantern. Now a moment's reflection will convince us that there is an immense difference between the one and the other. The oil painting exists without any one to watch over it, and is independent of its surroundings. But the picture cast upon the sheet by the magic lantern remains continuously, and from moment to moment, wholly dependent on the lantern. So long as the light is unchanged the picture remains unchanged ; should the light grow dim the picture grows dim also ; if the light is extinguished or removed the picture vanishes away utterly, so utterly, indeed, that no sign nor trace of its ever

having been upon the screen remains : no microscope could detect any trace, because it has left none ; no, not the faintest outline, not the faintest stain. It is just as though it had never been. Why ? Because its very existence is intimately and wholly bound up with the lantern. Of itself it has no staying power, it is absolutely unable to prolong its existence for even one brief moment after the lantern has deserted it. The light which gave it birth must continue to shine, or the picture itself will fade right away and disappear.

This is the best illustration I can think of to suggest the relation that subsists between creatures and the Creator, though even here the dependence is not so great as between the creature and Creator. God makes me. That is not enough. No. He must also keep me. Each minute, each second, His support is necessary : each second He must renew my life, or I shall vanish away. That means that God must be ever present with His creature, ever near to uphold it, ever feeding the flame of life. How marvellous it is to know that I am nearer to God than the unborn babe is to its mother. I may not perceive His nearness, I may not advert to it. Nay ! I may lose all memory of it, or even deny it. It matters not. Notwithstanding this, His presence is so vital that my very existence is in itself a certain proof of God's presence. Were He not with me I should have no existence. Were He not here, I could not be here either.

From this it is clearly understood that God is very,

very near to each one of us. Indeed, we may say more. He is not merely near us, but far nearer to us than we are to ourselves. Our body is composed of matter. It possesses extension, so that where one limb is the others are not ; and where one organ is the other organs are not ; but God is not divided nor extended, but is wholly and entirely in every point of space. We cannot withdraw ourselves from Him, nor break the union, for "in Him we live and move and have our being."

How exceedingly few there are who pause to consider their continual dependence upon God, and His ceaseless watchfulness over them.

III. But the third point has still to be considered. God is present not only by His wisdom and by His power, but also by His very essence. "Behold, I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord" (Jerem. xxiii. 24). In every point of space God is present in His unity of essence, and in His Trinity of persons. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, ever distinct, yet ever united, are truly and substantially everywhere. In all places and at all times we should behold them, were our eyes capable of seeing so pure and so divine a Being. Our life is lived, our days go by, under their very eyes. They read every one of our thoughts. They behold all our ways, all our words, all our works. The whole drama of our life unfolds itself slowly before them.

Nay, more. We possess God within us. The three adorable Persons, with all their attributes, with their power, wisdom, sanctity, and indescribable majesty, are within our very heart, and fill our entire being.

Lessius observes that the soul is immersed in the immensity of God as a tiny sponge in some vast ocean. As the waters penetrate and permeate and occupy every cell and fibre of the sponge, and are also beyond and above it and surrounding it on every side, so God is at once within us and without us. The illustration of this great theologian is, of course, a very imperfect one, since God is *wholly* everywhere, wholly within us and without us, whereas it is only a portion and a very small portion of the sea that is within the sponge, and the portion within is quite distinct from the portion without. But a really perfect illustration is not to be found.

So far I have endeavoured to state and to illustrate the teaching of theology as regards the all-pervading presence of God. Now we must pass to a very practical consideration, viz., how we should act so as to make this dogma a real help in our struggles after perfection.

When our Lord walked among men, it was not His mere presence that affected them. Certain dispositions upon their part were also necessary. They had to exercise faith and trust. So is it with God's invisible presence. Hence, spiritual writers frequently exhort us to imagine that we see God clearly before us ; and when we do this we are sometimes in danger of forgetting that what we imagine is not pure and simple imagination, but that it has a *fundamentum in re*, that is, a foundation in fact, since He is with us in very truth. Indeed, what we are trying to picture is the most intense of all realities.

I am, let us say, quite alone in my study ; or I am lying down and stretching my limbs on the soft sand, with the restful murmur of the sea in my ears, far away from my companions ; or I am lying awake in bed, in the middle of the night. Now, wherever it may be, God is present, but invisible. He is a pure Spirit. I cannot see Him. I cannot detect Him. Nothing tells me He is there. And it is precisely because I am in danger of forgetting Him altogether that I am recommended to exercise my imagination, and to draw a mental picture of Him, so that I may the more easily realise a great and most consoling fact.

If I make no effort to arouse myself, I soon grow quite oblivious of the fact that His eyes are searching me through and through. My faith teaches it. When I exercise reason I am assured of it, I know it must be so ; but if I never reflect, the consciousness of God's nearness diminishes and lessens till soon it vanishes utterly away. Hence we should emulate the example of the great saints, and exercise our imagination in trying to bring so consoling and so tremendous a truth home to ourselves.

This they did in many different ways, and some advocate one way and some another. Some, mindful of the words of St. Paul : " Know you not that you are the tabernacles of the living God," represented themselves as a tabernacle in which God takes up his abode. They would picture Him as an infant, or as a youth, or as the Man of Sorrows, with a human form, and with the wounds in his hands and feet, or sometimes as a judge enthroned,

or as seated in light and glory. The particular form under which they pictured Him might not be true, for of course the Sacred Humanity is not everywhere ; but these representations served to keep before them what is most emphatically true, namely, that the divine Person is truly present.

But, why, it may be asked, should so much importance be attached to accustoming ourselves to realise the presence of God ? The answer is, because there is scarcely any practice better calculated to lead us on to perfection. There are two considerations which should constantly be before us. The first is the ineffable majesty and irresistible might of God, and the second is the fact that we are always standing before Him, and for ever in His sight. It is quite impossible that we should remember these two facts without being influenced.

We are, let us suppose, exposed to some violent temptation. Some strong and overpowering attraction throws its subtle folds around us, arouses our worst passions, and sets our hearts on fire. We seem almost on the point of yielding. We are just about to allow ourselves the sinful indulgence, when lo ! a new and a yet stronger force begins to assert itself and to act upon our wayward will, and to draw us away from sin into the opposite direction. What has happened ? We have suddenly awakened to the fact that God Himself is watching us. We behold, with the eyes of faith, the ever Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, reigning in the very centre of our hearts, the living witnesses of our struggle.

Dare we offend them ? Dare we insult them and break their commands, and do so in their very presence ? Or, if we find it easier, we may confine our thoughts to one among the three divine Persons. We may picture to ourselves the loving form of Jesus, and see His eyes, so full of tenderness and pleading, turned full upon us, with an expression of gentle reproach, as well as of intense anxiety, as He looked at St. Peter after his denial. His pierced hands and feet and his riven heart seem to appeal to us more eloquently than words. He seems to be asking us what He has ever done that we should seek so to insult Him, and to crucify again the Lord of Glory, making Him a mockery. Can we resist such an appeal ? Surely not ; no, not if our faith tells us that His presence is not a mere fancy, but a most intense reality ; not a phantom of the mind, but a stern fact.

But this is not all. When, by dint of constant thought and study, we have at last acquired the habit of seeing God within us and of realising that He is a permanent guest, constantly occupying the chamber of our heart, we soon form the habit of conversing with Him, and thinking of Him. We grow more and more conscious of His presence. Soon we almost feel that He is there. We address loving words to Him. We do our utmost to honour and to entertain so great a Sovereign. We no longer fancy ourselves to be alone. When all is silent and every voice is hushed, when our earthly companions and friends are far away, we instinctively turn to Him who never leaves us, and we yield ourselves up

to His loving embraces. Even when we are at work, and occupied in our various daily tasks, we never lose the sense of His presence.

This leads to many ejaculations during the day, to many acts of love, of contrition, of petition. We soon yield to the influence of His presence, and find ourselves more detached, more interested in divine things and less occupied with the perishable.

In this way we are led along sweetly, yet most efficaciously, towards the goal. A soul ever basking in the rays of the divine presence may be compared to the fruit exposed constantly to the benign influence of the sun. The fruit to begin with is unripe, hard and sour, but the sun constantly shining on it gradually, but most efficaciously, ripens it, softens it, and sweetens it. So our soul is ripened and softened and sweetened by the divine Sun of Justice, God our Creator and our Preserver, for ever shining and glowing in our hearts.

#### RESOLUTION.

Constantly call to mind the fact that in God we live and move and have our being ; and strive always to conduct yourselves as though you actually saw Him gazing upon you.

## THE RESURRECTION

“If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”—I Cor. xv. 14.

THE whole of the Christian religion rests upon the divinity of its Founder as upon a most firm basis. If Jesus Christ be not God, then the very foundation of the Church crumbles to pieces. Now, one of the greatest and grandest proofs of His divinity is the stupendous miracle we are this day commemorating, namely, Christ's glorious resurrection from the dead. Indeed, St. Paul, addressing the Corinthians, goes so far as to say, “If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, and you are still in your sins” (I Cor. xv. 14 and 17).

And this is obvious, for our Lord Himself, when asked for a sign of His divinity, declared that He would rise again from the tomb after the space of some three days. “As Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.”

This was indeed a sign such as has never been witnessed either before or since. It was not only a miracle, but the greatest of miracles. A miracle compared to which all other miracles are insignificant and unimportant. Not only our Lord, but prophets

and seers of old, had cured the sick, and even restored the dead to life. That is to say, they, being alive themselves, had by invoking the power of God called others back to life. But who ever heard of anyone, however holy, however favoured, being able to restore his own dead body to life ? The dead body lies helpless and still ; there is within it no motion, no feeling, no sense, no thought. It can receive life only from some one possessing life. If it is to be raised from the dead it must be by some external force. The power cannot come from within, for no power remains within a dead body. The power must come from without.

The body of Jesus Christ is the only exception. For He was divine ; and though His soul might depart from His sacred body, and produce the phenomenon of death, yet His divinity was never for an instant separated from either His human soul or His human body. He, and He alone, then, could raise Himself from the cold, dark sepulchre wherein His torn and mangled remains had been laid.

This absolutely unique and unparalleled event put, if we may so express ourselves, the final seal of authenticity upon the truth of Christ's divinity. It startled the Jews and pagans alike, filled the desponding disciples and followers of Christ with heroic courage, won over innumerable converts, and little by little drew the world from paganism to Christianity.

Now, to bring out in all its strength the certainty of the Resurrection, Almighty God, who controls and overrules all human affairs, so disposed the

fluctuating course of events as to show forth with the utmost clearness the truth of this great mystery. That is to say, He so directed and arranged all the circumstances and incidents of the time as to accumulate evidence, and to heap up proof upon proof, so that one fact conspired with another to add weight to the argument.

Let us examine the sacred record, and this fact will at once be realised. But first, let us ask: What is it we have precisely to demonstrate? Well, the whole proof resolves itself into two points. The first is that Christ really died. The second is that He really returned to life.

We will begin with the first point. He most certainly died. Who would deny that would deny all history, for nothing is so well established. In the first place, the Jews and Pharisees thirsted for His life. And, at their instigation, He was solemnly and publicly condemned, by the judges of the country, to the ignominious death of the cross. The sentence further was carried out, not in some obscure corner, but in the very centre of Judea, and at a time when thousands of strangers had flocked into Jerusalem for the great feast.

He was hounded through the streets and up the steep hill of Calvary, outside the city walls, by an immense crowd of witnesses. When at last He reached the summit, He was already worn out with fatigue, want of food, and loss of blood, so that little more was needed to end His life. In this weak and dying state He was nailed to the cross, the great iron spikes passing through His hands and feet, and

literally draining the body of its blood. For hours the soldiers and the executioners, as well as the high priests and scribes and blaspheming Jews, stood by, till at last they saw Him bow His head in death. The marvel was He remained alive so long. If the account ended at this point, the enemies of the Christian Church might more easily have raised doubts. They might have made out some sort of a case, and have tried to persuade us that Jesus did but swoon away, and afterwards recovered.

But the account does not end here ; for weigh well what follows. When it was evident that Jesus was dead, Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked leave to take down the dead body from the cross and to bury it in his own garden, where a new tomb had been made.

Now Pilate was astonished that death had already occurred, so, before giving leave, he sent for the centurion in charge of the soldiers. He learnt from him that Jesus was indeed dead. So, having satisfied himself upon this point, he sent back the centurion to break the legs of the two thieves who were crucified at the same time. But as Jesus was already dead he did not break His legs, but thrust the point of his lance through the heart of Jesus, and immediately there gushed forth, not pure blood, but blood and water. This proves, what was sufficiently obvious before, that Jesus was dead already. But even if He had been alive the thrust of the lance through His heart would have instantly killed Him.

Following on the narrative we then find that the

sacred body was taken down from the cross and carefully wrapped in a winding sheet, and laid in the sepulchre hewn in the rock. Now, just picture to yourselves the poor, mangled, bloodless body stretched out upon the cold stone, with nothing but a linen sheet around it. If there had been any spark of life in it, it certainly would not have survived such treatment. The cold and exposure, and the want of food and nourishment, would most undoubtedly have extinguished any glimmer of life, had any remained after the crucifixion. No one in his senses can suppose that the mangled form of Jesus could remain alive during three days and two whole nights in the cold grave, with no one to dress its wounds, or to feed and nourish it. Yet we are asked and expected to believe that throughout this long interval He not only lived, but was so strong and vigorous as to be able at the end of it to roll back the ponderous stone from the entrance, and so to effect his escape, while the guards watched, or rather were asleep !

Much more might be said, but I think we have pointed out proofs enough to convince any reasonable man that Christ really and truly died.

But the proofs of His resurrection are equally cogent. For observe, the lifeless body was not merely laid in the tomb, but the Jews, in their hatred and suspicion, were determined to prevent any trick being played. They went to Pilate and asked for a guard to watch the tomb, because, as they said, "This seducer said while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." "Command

therefore the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day, lest perchance his disciples come and steal him away, and say to the people he is risen from the dead : and the last error shall be worse than the first." " Pilate said to them : You have a guard : go, guard it as you know." Off they went, determined to render any imposture impossible, and set guards to see that no one should tamper with the body. Nay, more, so intense was their unholy zeal that they first " made the sepulchre sure and secure, and then carefully sealed the stone " (Matt. xxvii. 66). Yet, in spite of all, their precautions served only to add certainty to the fact of the resurrection. For on the third day, as announced by Jesus, the stone was rolled back, and Jesus arose glorious from the darkness of the grave, His " countenance being as lightning and His raiment as snow " (Matt. xxviii. 3).

The guards were, naturally, exceedingly amazed and troubled, and " some of them came into the city, and told the chief priests all things that had been done " (Matt. xxviii. 11). What did these miscreants do ? They held a big meeting, and " took counsel with the ancients," and finally they resolved to bribe the soldiers to perjure themselves. They handed over to them " a great sum of money," and made them promise to say that Christ's " disciples came by night and stole Him away, when they were asleep." " So, taking the money, they did as they were taught " (Matt. xxviii. 15).

But such a clumsy expedient was useless. For our risen Lord appeared to many during the forty

days that elapsed between His burial and His ascension into Heaven. He appeared to His blessed Mother, to His apostles and disciples, to Mary Magdalen, and to many others. Though his followers were by no means ready to believe that He had arisen, the fact was forced upon them by the evidence of their senses. One of the most remarkable proofs is told us by St. John, in the twentieth chapter of his Gospel. He says that Jesus appeared to eleven of the disciples and made Himself known, but that one of the twelve, viz., St. Thomas Didymus, was not present. Further, that he refused to accept the testimony of the other eleven. He declared that nothing would induce him to believe that Jesus was really arisen unless he could see Him himself, and "examine the wounds in hands and feet, and put his hand into His open side" (John xx. 24-5). This, eight days later, he was permitted to do; and then he too was convinced. But there are many other considerations which we can but touch on, all of which proclaim the truth of the resurrection.

(1) If Christ's body did not rise, what became of it? The Jews and Pharisees were consumed with hatred and hostility towards the "new Christian sect," as they called it. When the apostles proclaimed the resurrection, why did they not produce the body, for that would have put an end to the controversy? And nothing would have been easier, if it had not risen. Why did they not point to the dead and corrupting remains, and so nip the first beginnings of the Church in its very infancy? Why? Because there were no remains to point to.

No ! Nothing but the linen cloths in which they had been swathed.

(2) Again—if Jesus had failed to keep His promise, if He had pointed to the resurrection as the sign of His divine power, and then had not risen, how are we to explain the whole attitude of His disciples ? Why did they grow so bold ? Why did they preach His divinity even to unwilling ears ? Why did they, who had been so fearful and timid, suddenly take on the courage of a lion ? Why did they readily and joyously endure imprisonment, scourging, and death in their loyalty to Jesus, if Jesus had failed them, and betrayed them, and proved Himself unable to redeem His promises ? The suggestion is preposterous. To state it is to refute it.

(3) But more. Looking back through the ages, we find that the Church, though persecuted, yet prospered. Though the whole weight of pagan Rome was united to destroy it, yet she advanced. Though her children were imprisoned, tortured, and put to death, yet she triumphed over all, spreading and conquering and winning her way, till at last the entire civilised world became Christian. How was this accomplished if Jesus was but a deceiver, and if Christianity were founded on a lie ? There is a cause for every effect, and the greater the effect, the greater must be the cause. How, then, shall we explain the startling progress and bewildering advance of the Church established by Christ, in the face of every obstacle, if we deny His Godhead, and His veracity, and His glorious resurrection ?

Admit His divinity, grant that He really arose

from the grave by His own power, and that explains all. It is a clear and ample solution. But deny that, and we are confronted with one of the most marvellous effects, without any adequate cause to explain it—a colossal structure resting on air ! We will end, as we began, with the words of St. Paul : “ If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, and you are still in your sins.”

But He *is* risen, and we possess in His resurrection an example as well as a pledge of our own. For He has opened heaven for us this day, and as we suffer with Him, so shall we also reign with Him throughout eternity. Amen, amen. So be it : so be it.

#### RESOLUTION.

As Christ arose from the dead, so let us, brethren, rise anew from our sins to a life of virtue and good works, and strive so to live that we may one day come to share in the glories of His resurrection.



PART II  
OUR BLESSED LADY AND THE  
SAINTS



# MARY IMMACULATE ;

## OR

### THE ENORMITY OF SIN

“ *Tota pulchra es Maria, et macula originalis non est in te* ”—“ Thou art all fair, O Mary, and the stain of original sin is not in thee.”—From the Vespers of the Feast.

**T**HOUGH the world is always murmuring and complaining of a multitude of imaginary evils that oppress it, yet the only real and essential evil that exists it fails to recognise, and passes by almost unnoticed. I refer, of course, to the evil of sin. Other things which do not merit the name, and which are wholly innocent, the world stigmatises as evils, simply because it dislikes them, and because they interfere with its happiness and pleasure; but the only real evil that exists the world scarcely pauses to consider.

What really *is* evil? What justly deserves the name? How shall we describe it, or define it?

I call that thing evil which possesses the power to thrust me out of my proper course, and that can hinder me from attaining the supreme end for which I was created. I call that evil which can rob me of my eternal and priceless inheritance, that can strip me, in a moment, of every grace and of every merit, that can close the gates of heaven for

ever against me, and bring me down to the very brink of hell. I call evil that whose breath is so poisonous that it can, in one moment, transform a saint into a demon, and provoke even the infinitely patient God to anger. Now, there is but one thing in existence that can work such havoc, and that is sin.

The world, in its blindness, cannot see these evils, because they are spiritual. Consequently it reserves the term evil for what is really free from all blame. It calls poverty evil, and sickness, and pain and privation and labour and toil, and misfortune, disgrace, and death ; though such things, when properly understood, are not evils at all. They cannot do any real or lasting harm to anyone who knows how to accept them in a proper and Christian spirit. How indeed can we describe as evil that which is productive of an immensity of good ? How can we call evil that which offers us such countless occasions of merit, and which, while it may try the body, yet enriches and embellishes and beautifies the soul.

Neither worldly misfortunes, nor poverty, nor sickness, nor even death itself can work us any lasting injury, so long as we accept them all lovingly from the hands of God. Quite the contrary. By the saints who see things as God sees them, such trials are highly appreciated and valued, because they are found to be stepping-stones on which they may mount up to a higher and higher degree of virtue. Yea, to the truly wise they are as welcome as the strong, rough winds are to well-trimmed vessels,

since they do but serve to speed them on their way, and enable them to reach more rapidly and more securely the longed-for haven of eternal rest.

No ! Poverty and want and sickness and death are all creatures of God, and faithfully fulfil His will. We read in the inspired book (Eccles. xi. 14), "good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God." God acknowledges them all, and He pronounces them all as good. There is but one thing He refuses to claim as His handiwork. There is but one thing with which He will have nothing to do, and which He utterly condemns and denounces and thrusts from Him, and that is sin.

While all things else were made by God, this was not made by Him. It is wholly and entirely man's creation—God has no share in it. The world, as it came forth, fresh from the hands of God, was beautiful and without blemish ; so that, when on the sixth day He had finished it, He was able to declare that it was good. But man, by an abuse of his free will, brought sin into the world. And that which till then had been surpassing fair was stained and disfigured by its loathsome presence. Sin was the one great blot, disfiguring the beautiful face of the creation.

God, who loves all else, hates sin. He hates it with all the measureless strength and power of His divine nature. For as darkness is opposed to light, because it is of a contrary nature, so is God opposed to sin. And just as the fiercer is the light, the more violently will it cast off the darkness, and the further it will drive it away ; so the more intense

the sanctity, the more violently will it repel and thrust all evil from its path. As God is infinite sanctity, so He hates sin, with a hatred that no tongue can describe, and no mind conceive—yea, He loathes it with a loathing which would transfix and prostrate the sinner with terror were it possible for him to understand it.

Sin, and sin alone, can arouse the anger of God, and enkindle the fires of His righteous indignation. All else He loves and fosters and cares for, and watches over, and lavishes His affections upon, but sin is an abomination in His sight. It is so stupendous a wrong that nothing can justify it. No circumstances can ever excuse it. Wherever it is found it must be punished and erased.

It is very necessary to recall these truths, and to keep them vividly before us, for men are losing sight of them, and are growing more and more unconscious of the essential wickedness, malice, degradation and ingratitude involved in every rebellion against God.

Truly, the world forgets, but the Church does not forget, and cannot forget. Indeed, she is here in order to remind us, and she is constantly raising her voice in solemn warning, and proclaiming far and wide the infallible truth that there is but one evil that need cause us any anxiety, and that one is the evil of sin.

And remember, brethren, that we speak here not only of grave sin, but of all sin : not only of mortal sin, which deprives the soul of its spiritual life and makes it a child of perdition, but likewise of every

venial offence, and of every deliberate fault, since even the lightest is an act of disobedience and rebellion against the infinite majesty of God, and therefore a serious evil.

This is so true, that the infallible Church of God declares that the smallest deliberate venial offence is a greater misfortune than all mere physical evils put together, so that it would be wrong to commit the slightest moral offence, even though we could thereby save our life, or even a thousand lives. As the great Cardinal Newman so expressively puts it :

“ The Church holds that it were better for sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions who are on it to die of starvation, in extremest agony, as far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say shall be lost, but should commit one single venial sin ” (“ Ang. Difficulties,” p. 199).

To our minds, so familiar with the thought of even great sins, this sentence may savour of exaggeration. And the venerable Cardinal may seem to be overstating the case. Would that it were so ! But alas, what he says is only too certain. Though we, who are conscious of so many imperfections, may feel (and with good reason) troubled by such a statement, it is nevertheless literally true, and the clear and undeniable doctrine of the Church.

Yes ! Sin, even venial sin, is of so dark a hue and of so hideous and vile a character, that nothing can compare with it. It is the only thing that disputes the sovereignty of God and places itself in opposition to Him ; the only thing that runs counter to his

all-holy will, and that dares to deny His dominion. It is the only thing that it is impossible for Him to love, the only thing that it is impossible for Him not to hate.

So much for the doctrine itself.

Now, if we would see this doctrine illustrated and exemplified and applied, all we need do is to contemplate God's dealings with His most Blessed Mother.

Recalling the mystery of the Incarnation, we find God resolved to take upon Himself our human nature and to become man. Now, to become a true man and a member of the fallen race, it was essential that He should have a mother, and that He should be, in very truth, what the Holy Scripture calls Him, viz., "the Son of man."

Yes, He was truly a son, but there was this tremendous difference between Him and all other sons: He was able to choose His Mother. With ordinary men there can be no choice. They cannot be consulted. They are wholly passive; wholly in the hands of others. Now, God was free not only to choose His Mother, but, having chosen her, He was able to prepare her and to fit her for the sublime position to which He determined to raise her. It is a command of God that children should love, honour, and obey their parents. "Honour thy father and thy mother." And the command He laid upon us He Himself would naturally be the first to fulfil to the letter, and in the most perfect manner possible. Jesus, the incarnate God, loved His Mother and honoured His Mother as a dutiful

son, and in this respect He stands as the model and example to all sons. Hence, He thought nothing too good, nothing too excellent, nothing too magnificent for her, in whose womb He was about to take flesh. He would give her the best and the richest dowry at His disposal. He would search His treasury through and through, and He would bestow upon her what He, in His infinite wisdom, knew to be the highest, the richest, and the most precious. He would deck her out with a beauty all her own, and reserve for her exclusively the brightest diadem of all ; for she is first of all, and Queen of all.

And what was that priceless gift ?

Was it freedom from poverty and want ? No ; for she was poorest of the poor. Was it immunity from care and pain and sorrow ? No ; for she was Queen of Martyrs. Was it honours and distinctions and a great name in this world ? No ; for she was unknown to men, and her life was hidden and obscure. Was it anything whatever that this world admires and prizes ? No ; nothing. Worldlings may value wealth and honours and comfort and ease, and a great name, and the first place in the courts of kings, and they may detest want and suffering and humiliations.

But God sees things, not as they appear to men, but as they really are, and hence He esteems least what the world esteems most ; and He prizes most what the world prizes least. To have decked out His Mother with perishable worldly wealth and pomp and glory and renown would have been but a sorry compliment. No. He would not insult her

by offering her such empty, worthless baubles, any more than a great king would insult a queen, whom he wished to honour, by offering her a tinsel crown or a string of paltry glass beads. No, a thousand times no. Vile things He leaves to the vile, and vain things to the vain, but in dealing with His blessed Mother He would select nothing less than the most costly jewel in His treasury, and that He would present to her as a portion alone worthy of her exalted dignity.

Hence we see that the gift which He bestowed upon her was one which immeasurably surpasses every other, viz., the plenitude of divine grace, and entire exemption from all sin. He made her soul so beautiful, so spotless, and so pure that the snow that crowns the great mountain tops, and which no human footstep has ever trodden, is not so dazzlingly white. The very lily as it first unfolds its petals to the early summer sun is not so free from stain and blemish.

He who knows all things knew that though anguish and pain and weariness and trial and humiliation may burn and gnaw and torment the soul, yet they cannot defile it nor sully or besmirch its supernatural loveliness and candour. Quite the contrary. Like flames of living fire playing on pure gold, they do but render it purer still and yet more precious.

But one thing could have tarnished the beauty and sullied the freshness and clouded the limpid transparency of Mary's soul. Only one thing could have dimmed her unapproachable splendour, and have diminished her full perfection, and that was

sin. But God would never allow its dark shadow to so much as pass over her.

Jesus Christ, who died for all, and for Mary as well as for others, purchased for her even a higher privilege than was granted to the rest of her race. For, while others are washed from the stain of their sins by the streams of His precious blood, Mary was preserved from ever contracting any stain.

In short, God so protected her, and so hemmed her in by His grace, that she never contracted the guilt that defiles all others. She never knew either original or actual sin, but passed through life untouched by the slime of the serpent.

So far, indeed, from being infected by him, it is she who, with her virginal foot, crushes his venomous head and curbs his terrible power to harm us. "She shall crush thy head," said God to the Evil One, "and thou, insolent rebel, shalt lay in wait for her heel." In the order of creation, she is the greatest of God's works, and a masterpiece of divine power and wisdom and goodness—and deservedly has He made her so, for she is the Mother of the King.

But, my brethren, what a tremendous lesson this dogma teaches us. Here we contemplate not an ordinary king, but the dread King of kings, infinitely rich and infinitely powerful, about to bestow the greatest favour He can think of upon her whom He loves beyond all, yea, above saints and martyrs and above angels and archangels. And what is this? What? It is spotless purity. Entire freedom from every sin, and the plenitude of grace

Oh, is innocence then so priceless a thing ? O great and omnipotent God ! is there, then, nothing in all the length and breadth of Thy infinite treasury of higher value than this ? No ! Assuredly not ; for if there were, Thou wouldst have bestowed it upon her who holds the highest place in Thy affections.

Oh, what indeed must be the malignity of sin, whose mere breath can spoil and poison and defile all it reaches !

God found no difficulty in allowing our Lady to suffer : “ A sword of sorrow shall pierce thy heart ” ; nor did He refuse to let her grieve and weep ; “ great as the sea is thy sorrow ” ; nor to be poor and an outcast ; for “ there was no room for her in the inns of Bethlehem.” No. He let her taste all the bitterness of His own Passion ; because these things are not really evil, but, on the contrary, most precious to those who can recognise their worth. There was but one thing He would never permit her to endure, and that is the real ignominy and degradation of moral guilt. No. She at least, the Mother of the infinitely perfect God, must know no sin. This privilege is magnificent, is unique, is unparalleled ! True : but it is hers ! “ Thou art all fair, O Mary, and the stain of sin is not in thee. Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honour of thy people.”

And while we honour her above all other creatures, what is the lesson to be drawn from her singular privilege ?

When we contemplate her privilege we learn that

if we are to render ourselves in any measure pleasing to God we must fly from all sin as from the face of a serpent.

Sin is our only foe. We must set a value upon innocence beyond all the treasures of the world—above gold and silver, above titles and possessions, beyond honours and dignities, beyond health and strength and beauty, and even life itself. It is the one passport to Heaven, it is the one quality that can draw down upon us the love and the affection of God Himself.

#### RESOLUTION.

Let us, in conclusion, my Brethren, turn our eyes towards her who is our Mother as well as our Queen, and resolve to guard ourselves as carefully as possible from all sin, so that we may be less unworthy to be numbered among her children.

## OUR LADY'S DOWRY\*

"All generations shall call me blessed."—Luke i. 48.

**T**HE Church of England, or, in other words, the Anglican Church as by law established, has now attained the respectable age of three full centuries, and like Shakespeare's typical man, "in its time it has played many parts." Like all purely human institutions, it is ever subject to change. It is constantly altering its opinion and shifting its ground, and showing a different front; now, in fact, condemning what it once blessed, and now blessing what it once condemned; and thus carrying the clearest proofs of its human and parliamentary origin in its ever varying and chameleon-like history. What we here refer to is not the change that results from mere growth—not the gradual development such as we may notice in the Catholic Church, where, as years go on, doctrines become more clearly recognised, and more explicitly defined, and more fully stated, and where there is progress without contradiction, like the progress of the dawn to the fulness of perfect day. No; what we notice in the Church of England is absolute change, instability, and contradiction. Thus, take that which has ever been the great central act of

\* In composing this sermon, I have been largely indebted to Father Bridgett's book, which bears the same title.

worship in the Catholic Church, the Mass. When the unscrupulous Tudor sovereigns succeeded in setting up the Anglican Church, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was condemned ; nay, ridiculed and scoffed at. In the homilies, which were declared to contain a " wholesome doctrine," and which were ordered to be read in all the churches, it was described as a " superstitious practice and a blasphemous fable " ; nor were these apostates satisfied with mere words : they actually put to death any one who should be caught offering up the Mass, or who had the hardihood to assist at it. What do we see at the present day ? Why, the Church of England has completely turned round. No brazen weathercock upon a church steeple, grating on its hinges, ever made such a complete revolution. Not only is the Mass not denounced, but it is actually celebrated ! Nay, there are hundreds of Anglican churches throughout England where what they call Mass is offered up. Not only do they pretend to say Mass, but they offer it for the dead. I well remember last November having a pamphlet put into my hands containing the names and addresses of some hundreds of Anglican churches where what they call " Requiem Masses " were to be offered for the faithful departed ! It may be urged that all the authorities do not approve it, but it goes on—they fail to stop it. So, again, with regard to many other practices, for instance, confession. At one time there was nothing too bad to say against it. It was horrible, immoral, and iniquitous ; the confessional was a hotbed of vice, a sink of impurity and corruption ;

no decent woman could go to confession. The confessor was regarded as a most unprincipled rogue; cunning, unscrupulous, using his power and his opportunities only for selfish and ignoble ends, and for the purpose of prying into the private affairs of family life. The priest was declared guilty of blasphemy in even professing to forgive sins; usurping prerogatives possessed by God alone, and I know not what besides. Now this is all changed. The weathercock no longer points due north. It has swung round under the influence of another wind, and points south—towards Rome. Yes; clergymen of the English Church, and even bishops and other dignitaries, not merely allow the practice, but actually hear confessions themselves and profess to pronounce absolution. Let us pass a step further and consider another peculiarly Catholic doctrine that is gradually beginning to assert itself again in England, viz., devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God.

The change that has come over England in regard to that is perfectly marvellous. The tide of bigotry has, indeed, ebbed away, and the incoming tide of a healthier opinion is advancing with a rush. It has not yet reached high-water mark, but it is advancing by leaps and bounds. Not only is the name of Mary heard with reverence on many Anglican lips, but even the image of Mary is seen in most unexpected quarters, as though she were again quietly resuming possession of the land. It is a sign of what Cardinal Newman called "the second spring."

Still, there yet remains in certain quarters a very

great feeling of dislike for this devotion ; and the bulk of Protestant England still rejects and denounces all honour and respect paid to the Blessed Virgin, and decries it as "Mariolatry." It is for this reason I think it advisable to set before you some slight sketch of the state of feeling in England in the grand old Catholic times, when England was "merrie England," and "merrie" because basking in the sunshine of true Catholic faith and doctrine.

For over a thousand years England professed the Catholic faith, and, among all Catholic nations, not one was to be found so devoted to Mary, or so ready to honour her and pay her reverence. As France glorified in calling itself "Our Lady's *Kingdom*," and Flanders "Our Lady's *Patrimony*," so England loved to be known and spoken of as "Our Lady's *Dowry*." Her images cut in stone, or carved in wood, were to be seen all over the land. They met one at the city gates ; they stood at the entrance to the bridges ; they kept guard over church and cathedral. Her pictures hung on chancel walls, or blazed in brightest colours from stained glass windows. Nor were these representations of our Blessed Lady mere ornamentations. They were honoured for the sake of her whom they represented, as is proved by records still extant. Thus it was enacted in the 13th century (A.D. 1216-72) that "the keeper of Our Lady's Chapel in Westminster Abbey was to see that both on the Assumption and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary twenty lamps and fifty tapers should be placed in the hands of the statues of the saints" (that surrounded her). In this chapel burnt

a lamp night and day, and somewhat later Ralph de Gloucester caused two more to be added. Though the great majority of her images were carved in wood and stone, yet there were also others, not a few, wrought in more precious substances, such as marble, alabaster, silver, and silver gilt, and in some cases even in solid gold. Thus King Henry III. bequeathed a statue of our Lady in pure silver to Westminster Abbey, and one of solid gold to his son Edward. Nor were our English forefathers less mindful of her in the churches they built. St. Augustine built a church in her honour at Ely in 607 ; St. Lawrence, Archbishop of Canterbury and successor of St. Augustine, caused another to be constructed, which he dedicated to her under the title of "the Holy Mother of God." This was in connection with the monastery of St. Peter's, at Canterbury. Soon the custom spread and became more and more general, so that in course of time there was hardly a town in England without its Church of St. Mary, and in the larger towns we find, by consulting the records, that there were two and three and four, and sometimes even more. Furthermore, where the cathedral or church itself was not dedicated to her, there was always a chapel within the church set aside as the Lady Chapel. In the thirteenth century, that golden age of architecture, when some of the grandest and noblest of the English cathedrals arose, the east end was generally reserved entirely to our Blessed Lady. In the few places where no special altar was erected to her, at least her image or statue found a place. A statute

passed in the Council of Exeter still exists, ordering that in every parish church there shall stand an image of the Blessed Virgin in addition to the statue of the patron. People had immense devotion to these statues. Candles and tapers were burnt before them, and lamps, flowers, and garlands were often employed to adorn them. Many persons, when dying, bequeathed large sums of money to be spent in adorning her shrine. And sometimes lambs, sheep, and goats were left in charge of the churchwardens to be sold, and the proceeds to be devoted to keep the lamp burning before her statue or picture. There was one image of our Lady in particular, stationed at old St. Paul's, which was a marked favourite with the people. "Oblations of candles and money before this image were so great," says a contemporary writer, "that Archbishop Arundel, in 1411, had to arbitrate for the disposal of them." Another evidence of the love of the English people for the Virgin Mother may be found in the number of shrines to our Lady that were to be found in all parts of the country. There were several even just immediately around London, and in spots well known to us, at all events in name. Those of Westminster, of Willesden, of Muswell Hill, of Islington, and of what was called Eastminster, near the Tower, in contradistinction to Westminster, were amongst the most famous. On certain days half the town would turn out and make a pilgrimage to one or another of these shrines; and while banners floated on the breeze, and the air was full of glad voices, singing hymns and canticles to her honour,

rich and poor, high and low, would gather around her altar, and forget their differences and social distinctions in the reverence they paid to one common Queen and Mother.

The love of Mary lay deep in the heart of the whole nation. Not only the grand dames and stately ladies working with their distaffs, and the maidens with their embroidery, sitting at home and sewing, thought of and invoked her name, but the boldest warriors and fighting men loved also to range themselves under her banner. The bravest knights, locked up in steel, would cross themselves as they entered on the battlefield, and would rush wildly on the foe, shouting as they waved their heavy broadswords : “ Our Lady and St. George ! ” And when victory rewarded their valour it was no unusual thing to see one or another of the more devout amongst them walking up the aisle of the church with his heavy metal armour clanging and ringing on the pavement at every step, to hang his trusty sword as a trophy and as a sign of thanksgiving at the feet of our Lady’s statue, there to remain as an abiding testimony of his love and gratitude. There is something remarkably beautiful and refreshing in this union of so much strength and bravery with so much gentleness and tenderness.

To all, indeed, our Lady was the most perfect ideal of beauty, grace, and comeliness. Men loved to link her name with all that was most beautiful. Whatever was sweetest and prettiest they associated with her, whether in town or country. Almost every district had its “ Lady’s Grove,” its “ Lady’s

Mead," or its "Lady's Bower." Not only did they love to bestow our Lady's name upon their daughters, but the choicest flowers and plants were also called after her. Thus one was spoken of by the people as "Our Lady's Mantle"; another was known as "the Virgin's Bower"; while others were known as "Our Lady's Seal," "Our Lady's Slipper," "Our Lady's Fingers," "Our Lady's Fringe," and "Maiden's Hair," "Marygold," and so forth. So also in the towns the streets and roads were not infrequently named after her. Even here in London, after countless changes, there yet remain some relics of the practice. We find instances of it in Ave Maria Lane and Marylebone. Some say that a bright, sparkling stream once flowed in that neighbourhood, and this stream or brook, or burn, was called, first of all, St. Mary's burn, in honour of our Lady, and then simply Mary's-burn, and finally Marylebone, which has degenerated to-day into something which sounds very like marrow bone. Furthermore, the very signboards, swinging and grating upon their rusty hinges, before the doors of shops and hotels, taverns, inns, and hostelries, often bore her image, and an inscription in her honour. Instead of "The Red Lion" or "The White Hart," "The World's End," "Man-in-the-Moon," and such strange signs that we meet with nowadays, the rattling old coaches of those times, travelling from Oxford or Cheltenham, or from Norwich to London, would pull up at "The Sign of the Virgin," or at the sign of "Our Lady of Pity." It is still customary to call certain inns by the name of

"The Angel." Now, this was originally "The Salutation." Up to the seventeenth century the signboard had represented upon it the angel Gabriel saluting our Lady.

After England turned Protestant this sign was, I suppose, considered too "Popish"; at all events, it was changed into the "Soldier and the Citizen." Later on it took the form of two simple citizens politely bowing to one another. In other instances, the figure of our Lady was simply obliterated, and the angel (relieved of his scroll, with the words "Ave Maria" written upon it) stood alone. Did time permit I would gladly speak of the many important guilds and confraternities, since their rules and regulations all prove the thoroughness of England's love for the Mother of God. Let me refer, at all events, to one of the best known and the noblest of all the civil and secular orders, viz., the Order of the Garter. This order, which is so highly prized and conferred upon crowned heads, and princes of royal blood, and upon kings and emperors, was founded by that most Catholic king, Edward III., in 1344. How far it may have departed from its primitive form I cannot say, but it is quite certain that it had originally for its chief patron the ever Blessed Virgin. St. George was, of course, one of the patrons, but the Blessed Virgin was the principal. Now why was this new order established? Why was this decoration conferred? One would scarcely credit it, did one not know the love for our Blessed Lady which burnt in England and England's kings in Catholic times, but it is a

fact all the same that this order was established to do honour to the Mother of God. In the statutes of the order, drawn up by Edward IV., it is expressly declared that his ancestor Edward III. had instituted the order to the honour of the Blessed Virgin, and that out of his singular affection for her he wished her to be honoured by his knights. Therefore, it goes on to say, by a unanimous vote they had resolved that on each of the five great festivals of our Lady, and on all Saturdays, as well as on the Feast of St. George, the knights should wear, during the divine office (so they evidently attended office on those days), a peculiar habit having a golden figure of the Mother of God on the right shoulder, *and* that on each of these days they should recite five times the Our Father and Hail Mary. We may gather how far the original intention of the founder of the Order has been departed from by the fact that the Garter is now bestowed upon those who are not even Christian! During the reign of our late sovereign it has been conferred upon such men as the Shah of Persia, the Mikado of Japan, and the Sultan of Turkey.

Thus, in the most unsuspected quarters, we meet with proofs of the love that our ancestors bore towards Christ's immaculate Mother. Indeed, almost everything then suggested and called to mind our Blessed Lady, and was expressive of England's devotion to her, from the great figureheads on the prows of gigantic war-ships down to the little silver and golden maiden-spoons, so often referred to in wills of the period, and so called because each spoon

terminated in a little image of the Mother of God. If the kingdom of England has lost these traditions and has ceased to be animated by the old devotion, let us Catholics at least strive to prove ourselves worthy of so powerful and so gentle a Queen. If we are the brethren of Jesus, then we are the children of Mary, and Mary will be to us the most loving and the tenderest of mothers. Fear not to speak to her ; fear not to invoke the aid of her intercession. God will hear her when our sins and our unworthiness prevent His listening to us. He loves to grant us favours through her. As he has given *himself* to us through Mary, so, says St. Bernard, will he give us all else through her.

#### RESOLUTION.

Let us often have those words upon our lips, Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, &c. Mary will then be near us at the last dread moment of our death, and will obtain for us by her prayers a safe transit from the dangers and trials of earth to the security and happiness of Heaven, where her dignity and position are recognised and rejoiced in by saints and angels.

## A MOST REMARKABLE WORKING MAN

ST. JOSEPH

“Go to Joseph, and do all that he shall say to you.”

—Gen. xli. 55.

**T**HE saints of God's Church are many in number and most various in character. They are to be found in every position and walk of life, from the highest to the lowest. Some have sat upon the dizzy height of a throne, and have ruled over great kingdoms, like St. Louis of France, and St. Edward of England, and St. Henry of Germany. Others have served God in poverty and subjection, like St. Isidore, who was a farm labourer, and the Blessed Benedict Labré, who was a simple beggar, begging his food, in the name of God, from door to door. Some have been soldiers, or professional men, or servants and retainers, and so on. But in every saint, no matter what may have been his special position, we may contemplate a great work by a great Artist, and a masterpiece of divine grace. Every saint is, as it were, a book in which we can read and study the mysterious action of God's guiding hand, and the exquisite effect of His gentle, loving, and persuasive Providence. We, my dear brethren, are perhaps too self-willed and unbending to make much progress in holiness; but

the saints attained to the highest virtue because they were always most submissive to God's will. God would make us all saints if we would but let Him, and if only we would not resist His will. For, just as some consummate artist will take a piece of soft, formless clay, and will mould it into a beautiful and superb statue, which will ravish all eyes, and delight every beholder, so God will take any faithful soul that yields up its will, and that becomes as soft clay in His hands, and will form it and fashion it by His all-powerful grace, till He makes it an object of exquisite beauty and of priceless worth in His sight. But this depends upon us, for we have free will—we can and we do resist, and then He can no more turn us into saints than a potter can turn a lump of hard, dry, unyielding clay into a thing of beauty. Hence it follows that just as every flower is different from every other, yet all are beautiful, so, though all the saints are different, yet they all possess a splendour and a beauty of their own. The Holy Spirit of God compares them to one of the most beautiful objects in nature, viz., the stars : “ The just shall shine as stars.” How supremely beautiful are the stars ! How clear and bright and pure they look. How radiant and gloriously they shine in the blue vault of heaven, far from the stress and storm and turmoil of this sin-laden world. Yet, though all are beautiful, nevertheless “ star differs from star in beauty and glory.” So also do the saints. Some outshine and surpass others in sanctity and perfection.

Now, among the saints, one of the very greatest

is undoubtedly the saint to whom the Church has dedicated this month of March : I mean the glorious St. Joseph. He was an *ordinary* labourer or working man in the estimation of the world, but a most *remarkable* one in the eyes of God. Our Lady, of course, occupies a position all to herself, as the Immaculate Mother of God Incarnate, and no one can approach her in sanctity ; but after the Blessed Virgin, who is so great or so privileged as St. Joseph ? His position, though far below that of God's own Mother, is immeasurably above that of most others. Indeed, it is unique and without a parallel. Consider his office, and you will at once realise that it is the most sublime and exalted that the mind can imagine. By the Providence of God he was called upon to occupy the place of guardian and protector of the incomparable Virgin Mary and of her divine Infant. The Eternal Father selected him from among all others, and entrusted to him the custody of His divine and only-begotten Son during the whole course of His infancy and childhood, as well as the custody of His Blessed Mother. It was his duty as well as his privilege to watch over them, to work and labour for them, and to live in their company. He enjoyed their society, and stood related to them in the most familiar and intimate manner possible. What honour, what privilege can equal that ? What greater distinction can fall to the lot of anyone in this world ? Surely it must have been a foretaste of Heaven itself ! a sort of anticipation of the privilege enjoyed by the saints now reigning in glory. Perhaps the best means of

realising St. Joseph's position will be to compare it with our own. If we are true Catholics, no doubt but that we love to watch before the Blessed Sacrament. We deem it a great blessing and grace to kneel at the foot of the tabernacle, especially when our Divine Lord is exposed upon the throne during Benediction, or while the devotion of the Forty Hours is taking place. And, when we read, as we do sometimes in the lives of the saints, that Jesus Christ has actually appeared, and made Himself visible, for a moment, in the Sacred Host, or that He has spoken words of comfort and of affection, we are deeply stirred by feelings of wonder and of holy envy. Were such an experience to be given to us, we should remember it and thank God for it all the days of our lives.

Imagine, then, what would be our feelings of joy and delight if Jesus were not only to appear to us in the Blessed Sacrament, but to stand before our very eyes, in human form, and to take us lovingly by the hand and accompany us home and remain with us, and live with us, in our own humble abode, to the end of our lives. In that case we should not have to go to church any more, for Jesus would be always with us. This seems an extraordinary supposition to make. But it was, in very truth, St. Joseph's lot. *Now* it is enacted in the Church of God that only the consecrated hands of a duly ordained priest shall touch our Blessed Lord, even under the Eucharistic veils of the Blessed Sacrament. It is reserved to priests alone to take our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament in their hands, to carry Him through the

crowded streets, and along the busy thoroughfares to the bedside of the sick and the dying. And even then, though it is indeed Jesus Christ, yet He lies hidden away under wheaten veils, and cannot be discerned except by the eyes of faith. But St. Joseph was far more privileged. Why, he could gaze directly upon His sacred humanity, and speak to Him, face to face. Nay, more, he could fold Him lovingly in his arms, look full into His beautiful countenance, watch the sweet smile playing about His features, and converse with Him as a father converses with a son. And this not once or twice, on some special and rare occasion, but day by day, for many years. Who can adequately measure the greatness of this extraordinary honour, or realise the immensity of the favour? When our Lord is exposed upon the altar the candles are lit, the flowers give forth their sweet perfume, and the clouds of incense rise before the throne on which the monstrance rests, while the faithful bow their heads in silent prayer, and their voices are hushed in awe and reverence.

Yet, in the humble house of Nazareth, there was even more than "exposition of the Blessed Sacrament." I say "more," because in the Church, to-day, our Lord hides His humanity as well as His divinity, whereas, in the humble dwelling where Joseph and Mary lived, there was the self-same Jesus, but with His human nature ever visible and evident. No church, no cathedral, however magnificent, no sanctuary, however adorned, was more holy or more blessed than the cottage of Nazareth.

None contained devouter worshippers, for they who worshipped there were Mary Immaculate and the chaste St. Joseph.

Pause and reflect upon the unique and wholly exceptional nature of such a life. Remember how it was continued month after month, and year after year, till the time of his death, for the space of some thirty years. Try to realise the feelings of St. Joseph, as he worked at his trade as a carpenter to earn food and nourishment for the Divine Child. Just imagine the joy and sweetness that filled his heart as he weighed and pondered over the immensity of his privilege. To be with God Incarnate, to live with God, to have God ever visibly present ; to look upon Him, in his human nature, who created the world, and all things visible and invisible ; to contemplate that very Body, so precious that its immolation was destined to redeem the entire world, and that Flesh, so holy that it was to become the life-giving food of millions upon millions of men yet to be born, and a source of endless graces and blessings to all the world. These privileges of St. Joseph were shared, and more than shared, by our Lady, but by nobody else.

Now, it is a well recognised law, laid down by spiritual authorities, that when God, in His wisdom, destines a creature to any particular office or position, He confers upon him all the graces and qualifications and perfections that such a position demands ; so that, in the case of St. Joseph, we must conclude that he received graces and spiritual favours from God of quite exceptional richness, such, indeed, as

to fit him (in so far as a human being is capable) for the sublime dignity to which he was called, as the foster-father of Jesus and as the husband of Mary.

Oh, how spotless must have been his purity, how ardent his charity, how profound his humility, and how consummate his prudence and his zeal! Yet, notwithstanding this, his whole life is so simple and so ordinary in all its interesting details that it admits of imitation in a degree which can be asserted of few other saints. It consisted essentially in a complete conformity with God's will. He led a life of hardship and of strenuous labour, of great poverty and humility, for he was a labouring man, and spent his days sawing, cutting, hammering, planing, driving in nails, and so forth, so that he might win bread for his young wife and the Divine Child; yet it was a life of marvellous sanctity.

Some persons think that sanctity consists in doing extraordinary things. The example of St. Joseph proves to us that sanctity consists rather in doing ordinary things with extraordinary perfection.

What is the essential difference between the millions of ordinary workmen to-day and the great St. Joseph? What is the real distinction between you, my brethren, who are busy all day, and who work in the mines, and in the factories, and mills, and shops, and other such places, and the glorious saint we are this month commemorating? If you have to do hard work—well, so had he. If you have to earn your livelihood, and keep a family by the sweat of your brow, so had he. If you often go

to bed weary and tired, and worn out, remember that he had to do just the same. He felt the pinch of poverty, and often stood in greater want of the very necessities of life than you have ever done, even during a coal strike, or an epidemic.

Yet he was a saint, and a great saint. How are we to explain this ? Was it his work that made him a saint ? Was it his labour ? No ; neither toil nor hard work can, of itself, sanctify anyone. If it could we should have many more saints than we have. No, it is not *what* we do that matters, but *why* we do it. What God looks to, what He values, what He rewards, is the intention, the good will, the purity of motive. What, indeed, are even the grandest of our actions and the noblest of our achievements, and the most successful of our enterprises, in the eyes of Him who by a single word can create a thousand worlds ? Nothing ! Nothing whatever !! The one and only thing that can confer any value on our actions is our upright intention. St. Joseph was a saint because he had but one strong and ruling ambition, and that was to love and serve God. He knew that if he were poor and despised it was the will of God. So he loved his poverty. He knew that nothing ever happens by chance, and that not even a sparrow falls without the will of the Heavenly Father. Consequently, he felt that it was God's holy providence that had placed him in a position in which he had to exert himself, and spend laborious days. So he did not complain, nor murmur, nor find fault, but went about his ordinary daily toil in a spirit of

loving submission to God's holy will. Besides this, he had another consolation, for if he suffered he knew that Jesus suffered yet more. If he was poor and despised he knew that Jesus shared both his poverty and his humiliations. Hence, he did not place his happiness in the things of this world, nor did he set any value upon the perishable goods that most men so run after, but he fixed his heart and his mind on the imperishable joys of eternity, and lived with the thought of Heaven ever before him. What, indeed, was this world in the eyes of St. Joseph but a land of exile? What was life itself but a time of trial, a period of probation? No one realised more clearly than he the words of the apostle, "We have not here a lasting city," and, "We are but pilgrims and sojourners upon earth," mere travellers, wending our way along the dusty road of life, to the beauteous City of God. Thus, rejoicing, sorrowing, praying, and labouring, he passed through life, till at last he fell ill, and died, breathing out his pure soul in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Why cannot we imitate so great and so glorious an example? What is to prevent our walking in his footsteps, and sanctifying our souls in a similar manner?

All that is needed is a little courage, accompanied by a strong resolution. To rise in the morning at the appointed time, to offer our hearts to God, to kneel down and say our prayers devoutly, and thus to bring God's blessing on the whole of our day. Then to set about our work with a pure intention, that is to say, with the desire of pleasing God and

fulfilling His holy will, submitting to the pain and weariness of it all out of our love for Him, and even rejoicing in the midst of our labour because we are thus called to share in the toil and suffering of Him who, for our sakes, chose to be the Servant of all, though He was really the Lord of all, and who, "having glory set before Him, preferred the cross."

To become a saint it is not necessary to leave your present occupation or employment. It is not necessary to fly from the haunts of men, and to retire into the cloister or into the desert, or to do anything startling or extraordinary. All that is requisite is to consecrate your ordinary daily actions, by referring them all to God, and doing them to please Him, and for His sake. In order to enable us to do this, we must try to realise the presence of God. As we cannot see Him with the eyes of our body, we must try to gaze on Him constantly with the eyes of our soul. For "in Him we live and move and have our being," as the apostle reminds us. It is true that St. Joseph had God Incarnate visibly before him, and that he could actually see Him, but, though unseen, God is as truly with us as He was with him, and a constant witness of all we think or say or do.

In the meantime life is wearing on, and the end is stealthily approaching. If we are ever to make any advance, we must delay no longer, but begin at once with all earnestness and energy. How many of the friends of our youth have already departed, and how suddenly some of them have been called away! Then learn from them a lesson. Take

warning from their fate, and start at once, and without any further hesitation, to put your house in order, and to live for God alone. The affairs of this short life, and the state and condition we may be in here, are matters of extreme insignificance ; what alone does matter is the position we secure for ourselves in the world beyond the grave.

#### RESOLUTION.

Then be wise and prudent, and full of courage, and God will second your efforts and enable you, by His grace, to bring your wills into complete conformity with His ; and thus you will attain perfection, and obtain eternal life, and live for ever and ever in the most complete enjoyment of every conceivable delight.

## ST. PETER: THE BOND OF UNITY

“ The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed.”—Matt. xiii. 31.

**C**OMMENTATORS on Holy Scripture tell us that by “ the Kingdom of Heaven ” is here meant the Church of God upon earth. Now, our Blessed Lord likened it to a grain of mustard seed. How? In two ways: (a) firstly by reason of its rapid growth and expansion, and (b) secondly, by reason of its unity and the harmony of its parts. This resemblance was foretold by Jesus Christ. You will observe that the figure is one chosen by Himself. It is quite clear that if He be really God He could not have made a mistake in the selection of this image. On the other hand, if He be not, He could not have looked into the womb of time and seen what it was going to bring forth.

Those who listened to Him were at a great disadvantage as compared with ourselves. They could only take His words on trust. For the events He predicted and described were future events, so that His followers could not test Him, and had no means of ascertaining by experience whether he were a true prophet or not.

We who are now living are quite differently

situated. We can look back through the long vista of the ages. We can see for ourselves the history of the Church for nearly two thousand years. And if that history puts the seal on Christ's veracity, it also shows unmistakably which of the many claimants *is* the Church of Christ, which, in a word, corresponds to His description. Let us limit ourselves to two points, as time will not permit of more. Now, St. Matthew writes that "a man," *i.e.*, Jesus Christ, "took a grain of mustard seed," *i.e.*, the infant Church, and that he "planted it in his field," *i.e.*, the world. (A) Now just as the grain of seed was small and insignificant at first, but in the course of time spread and developed and put forth great branches, so the Church began in a small way, in one little corner of the earth, and then penetrated into distant lands and extended its branches in every direction. We all know its history, and how in spite of the hostility of the world, and the pitiless persecution of kings and emperors, it went forth "conquering and to conquer," till at last there was no part of the world, however distant and however inhospitable, where the Church had not bishops and priests and faithful subjects. Thus His words have been realised to the very letter. For His Church is not local, nor national, nor circumscribed, but Catholic and universal. Though its centre of government and authority is at Rome, its circumference is the wide, wide world. (B) The second likeness to the mustard seed is also conspicuously displayed in the Catholic Church, though we cannot find a trace of it elsewhere. And that is *unity*.

It has not merely a unity similar to that of the mustard tree ; but the unity, in both cases, results from and flows from a similar principle.

When our Lord said His Church would become like to the mustard tree, probably there was such a tree growing close by, to which He pointed. Let us consider it. (a) In the first place we note that a tree is one single organic whole. Like the human body (to which the Church is compared by St. Paul) a tree, though composed of many different parts, is a single individual object. And observe, not only are there many parts, some large, some small, some more important and some less, but they are all co-related, and connected with one another, so as to result in one harmonious whole.

In a similar way, Christ's Church, if it is to resemble a tree, must also be one. It is impossible to have two or more *true* Churches, just as it is impossible to have two or more true Gods. One may have hundreds of false Churches—men-made Churches—just as one may have hundreds of false Gods, all made by man. But only a single *true* one. Hence : " One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism."

But while both the tree and the true Church are single entities, yet they both have many different parts, and each part has a special function to fulfil. In the tree you find there is one solid trunk. Not two, observe, but one. Upon that one trunk the entire tree depends. The sap from that one stem rises up, and percolates through the branches, and along the twigs, and forces itself into the furthest extremities, and imparts life and vigour even to the

most distant and tiniest leaf at the extremity of the topmost bough. If it should fail to reach a single bough, or even a single leaf, then that bough or leaf will perish, and must perish, and fall off. It dies, and is cast aside.

In so far as the material can be compared to the spiritual, the same thing holds good in the Church. In the Church also there is but one solid trunk. And that one trunk supports and holds together, in perfect unity, the entire Church. That single trunk or stem is the Vicar of Christ. He is the guardian of the sacred deposit of truth and divine revelation. It is he that feeds and nourishes every individual of Christ's flock, that hinders the poison of heresy entering into the system and flowing through its veins, and destroying it, and that maintains it in life and spiritual vigour. It matters not how humble, how insignificant, or how poor a Catholic may be, unless the true unadulterated sap of sound doctrine reach him and flow into his soul, he must wither and perish, just like the leaf on the tree that the sap has failed to reach. Now to return to the mustard tree. How, let us ask, does the life-giving sap reach the furthestmost twigs and leaves? We shall find that it is owing to a special arrangement, in virtue of which the various parts of the one great whole are linked up, and bound together. When the sap rises in the trunk, it passes on into a number of great massive limbs; then from these great limbs it pushes on again, into a vast number of twigs and smaller branches, and finally it passes from the twigs and smaller branches into the capillaries and tiny

vessels of each and every single leaf that flutters on the entire tree. In short, all are connected, all are united, all are fed and nourished by the sap, rising from one and the same central stem.

Exactly the same arrangement may be discerned in the Church of God. And, as a consequence, Catholics of all nations, all over the world, are also united in one doctrine and one faith. As the tree has one only trunk, but possesses many massive limbs growing out of it, and smaller branches growing out of these limbs, and finally leaves ; so the Church has one supreme head, the Pope ; many important limbs, which are the Bishops ; and smaller branches, which are the priests and pastors, and finally innumerable leaves, which are the faithful throughout the world. And the sap of true doctrine circulates throughout the entire organism. To see how it works, let us take any Catholic article of faith—for instance, the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Lady. That doctrine was decreed by Pope Pius IX. in the year 1854.

The Pope communicated his decision to the Bishops, the Bishops in their respective dioceses, all over the world, communicated it to the priests, the priests passed it on to their various flocks. All received it and accepted it, and believed it, for it came to each and every member as the infallible truth of God. And so with the doctrine of infallibility, and so with every other dogma of our holy religion. Thus in the Catholic Church we see the perfect accomplishment and actual realisation of the promise of Christ, and the complete fulfilment

of His divine words. The mustard seed has indeed grown and developed into a mighty tree, with stem, branches, and leaves, one great organic whole united in every part. And what does that ensure for us? What does it lead to? It results in perfect unity of doctrine and creed.

And is this important? Most important. Vitally important! For where there is unity there is truth; where there are differences, divisions, and parties, there is most certainly error. Where all are one, it may truly be said that "the gates of hell have not prevailed." So soon as there are divisions, it is certain that error has entered, and that "the gates of hell have prevailed."

Further, unity is the special mark by which our Lord would have His Church recognised. He set that mark as a seal upon His Church that every honest enquirer might be able to recognise it, and distinguish it from all others. He was God. He knew that other Churches would spring up. He knew that there would be many rivals and many claimants. So He placed upon His Church a special and characteristic mark, the mark of unity, to distinguish it from all others. Addressing His heavenly Father he prayed: "Father, that they all may be one. . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John xvii. 21). Doctrinal unity was and is, and ever will be, so long as the world lasts, the very touchstone and distinguishing mark of Christ's Church. This unity is found in the Catholic Church, clear, conspicuous, unmistakable, undeniable, but nowhere else. There is no time to

compare ourselves with the hundred mushroom churches that have sprung up all around. But take one as a specimen of the rest. *Ex uno disce omnes*. Let us take the Church of England as by law established. If we give the matter a thought, we might naturally conclude that it *ought* to be comparatively easy to maintain unity there. In the first place (as its name indicates) it is but a local, a national Church, the Church of England ! In the second place, it is but three or four centuries old, and therefore hardly old enough to have got out of hand ; in the third place it is composed almost entirely of English or English-speaking people ; in the fourth place its supreme head is the King, and its Bishops are officials of the State appointed by the Prime Minister, and paid liberally like any other public functionaries. Further, the entire Church is but a small, insignificant body as compared to the Catholic Church. But, with all these helps to unity, is it united ? No ! in spite of all these natural advantages, it is without the essential mark of unity. Are all its members agreed at least on fundamental and vital doctrines ? No.

If you ask what is meant by the Holy Eucharist, or whether baptism is essential to salvation, or if the clergy have the power of absolving from sin, will you get the same answer from all ? No ; most emphatically no ! Even on these essential points there is no agreement. In the Catholic Church, though its children are hundreds of millions in number, and embrace men of all nations, languages, colours, ranks, and conditions, we shall find perfect

unity. In the Anglican Church some are High, some are Low, and some are Broad : but if anyone were to ask a Catholic whether he were " high " church, or " low " church, or " broad " church, he would open his eyes, and wonder what in the world was meant. " High Church ? " he would exclaim. " Low Church ? Why, there is only one Church, and we are all exactly the same. We may differ in politics, and in taste, and in education, and in much else, but in faith we are all one." How, indeed, could it be otherwise, considering we all derive our doctrine from the self-same source, and all bow to the decisions and to the declarations of that Rock, Peter, upon whom Christ established His Church, and whom He commanded us to hear even as though we were listening to Himself : " Who heareth you, heareth me." *They*, on the contrary, will not build their Church on the Rock, *i.e.*, on Peter, but on the sand. Is it to be wondered at that it falls to pieces ? Perhaps a Catholic will put a few questions to the non-Catholic enquirer. He will say : " Do you believe the Bible ? Is it the word of God ? " " Of course," he will reply, " I am an Anglican. All Anglicans revere that sacred book." Very well, then you must believe that Christ intended His Church to be one, and that He promised it should always be one, and that He set unity upon it as a mark, to distinguish it from all others, just as our King has his head impressed upon all the coins of the realm to distinguish them from all foreign coins. Now it stands to reason that since Christ decreed that His Church should always be one, He must

have laid down some principle of unity. What is it? We answer it is the appointment of a single supreme and infallible head, whom all must obey. It is a principle to which we can point, and which we invite you to examine for yourself. It is simple, practical, efficacious. It really does what it professes to do. It achieves its purpose. It unites over two hundred and fifty millions of Catholics, representing all nations, throughout time and throughout space.

How can you Anglicans, with all your divisions and variations, with your high and low and broad sections, how can you possibly arrogate to yourselves the title of Christ's Church? You are not merely not united, you do not so much as possess any principle or any kind of mechanism capable of producing unity. The Anglican Bishop of Carlisle writes: "Within the Church of England divisions are loudly rampant . . . and strong and obvious, amounting at times to bitter hostility." \* Can any man conceive any one of the eight or nine hundred Catholic Bishops speaking in such terms of the Catholic Church? Such a divided Church (and the same may be said of all the other sects), whatever else it may be, and whatever fraction of truth it may yet contain, bears not the stamp of orthodoxy, and is no Church of Christ. If Christ were not able to keep His promise better than that, we would rightly conclude that He were not God at all.

When did Christ establish the great bond of unity

\* *Hibbert Journal*, p. 285, A.D. 1908.

which keeps us all united? When did He make St. Peter the ruler of His Church, His representative, and His vicar? When did He commit to him the task of "confirming his brethren," and of "teaching the whole flock, both sheep and lambs"? Let us briefly recapitulate the history. The first step in the process was when

(1) Christ changed his name. "*Thou art Simon the son of Jona; but, thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter*" (John i. 42). Why did Christ confer a new name on Simon? Why should he henceforth be known as Peter, or Rock? Obviously, if Christ changed his name from Simon to Rock, it was because he was destined to occupy the position of a rock. The surmise grows into a certainty so soon as we call to mind that Christ was about to build a Church. The apostle writes: "You are God's building (1 Cor. iii. 9). Now, for a material building, a material foundation is needed. But His Church was not to be a material but a spiritual edifice, so it needed a spiritual foundation, that is to say, the stable, firm, persevering faith of its chief. Then, at a later period, Christ speaks more explicitly. Again addressing the prince of the apostles, He begins with these words: "I say to thee, that thou art a rock, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Here we feel the full force and meaning of the change in Simon's name. The infant Church was to be built upon him. He was to be its support, to hold it together, to keep it from falling to pieces,

as a house which is built upon sand ; and to prevent those “ unhappy divisions ” complained of in other Churches. All this was to be accomplished not by virtue of his own strength, but solely by the omnipotence and power of God. “ I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not ” (Luke xxii. 32). Really, some of our separated brethren seem to forget that Christ is God, and that anything He declares He will do will most certainly be done. It is no more difficult for God to protect St. Peter and his successors throughout the ages, and to safeguard them from error in matters of faith, so that “ they fail not,” than it is for Him to give hearing to the deaf or sight to the blind. We know Peter is the rock, because God so declared : and knowing him to be the rock, we know also that we can safely lean upon him, and trust him ; and when our faith wavers, or doubts arise, we refer the matter to him as to the lawfully constituted authority, and his decision is final. *Roma locuta est, causa finita.* In hearing him we hear Jesus Christ, whose vicegerent he is, according to the testimony of God Incarnate : “ Who heareth you, heareth me.”

But this is not all. After declaring St. Peter to be the rock on which He built His Church, He continued : “ And to thee do I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” What is meant by “ the keys ” ? He held no material keys in His hands. No. The keys are symbolical. He merely used a thoroughly recognised Oriental expression, which denoted supreme power. Thus, who holds the keys of a citadel or a town wields absolute control.

Hence the custom of handing over the keys to a conqueror. Instances are to be found, too, both in the Old and the New Testament, thus : " I shall lay the key of the house of David upon (Eliacim's) shoulder, and he shall open, and none shall shut ; and he shall shut, and none shall open " (Isa. xxii. 22). Even Almighty God Himself, when referring to His own indisputable authority, finds no better symbol under which to present it than the keys. If we turn to the first chapter of the Apocalypse, we shall find Him represented as saying : " I am the first and the last . . . and behold, I have the keys of death and of hell " (verse 18).

Now God Incarnate, that is to say, Jesus Christ, who possesses the keys not only of death and of hell, but also of heaven, gave these keys to Peter and his successors. And though Protestants are too proud to admit it, he holds them still : and if there is any truth in God's words, he will hold them to the end. He opens and none can shut, he shuts and none can open.

Would you have a recent and up-to-date instance of the use of the power thus conferred ? We have it in the erroneous teaching of the Modernists. They made a bold attempt to infect the Church with their errors, and to tear the seamless garment of divine truth. Did they succeed ? Did they create a schism ? No ! Why ? Because Peter, in the person of Pius X., rose up, pointed out their errors, and condemned them. And every Catholic recognised the voice of Christ, speaking through His Vicar, and remembered the promise : " Behold,

I am with you all days," and if "all days," then in the twentieth century as well as in the first. Our position is thus secure. We have no fear, though storms may rage, and winds may blow, and wreckage may lie strewn all around us, upon every side, for we know that the barque of Peter will outride every storm, for He has made this promise, whose words cannot fail : "Heaven and earth may pass away, but My words shall never pass away."

#### RESOLUTION.

Let us rejoice and thank God, who through no merit of our own has called us into His one only true and infallible Church ; and let us resolve to show an ever ready and childlike obedience to His Vicar on earth, and to listen to him as to Christ Himself, according to the words : "Who heareth you, heareth Me."

## ST. EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

“The patient man is better than the valiant ; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh cities.”  
—Prov. xvi. 32.

**T**HE Church is ever striving to impart to us, her children, the spirit and the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and to lead us along the paths of virtue and perfection. Her ordinary method is by precept and command, and by direct instruction and exhortation. But to these means she adds the far more attractive and inspiring method of example and personal illustration. She points with a just pride to her saints. She unfolds before us the history of their lives. She sets them before us in order that we may see the Gospel of Jesus Christ actually reduced to practice, and that we may witness how the highest maxims and the most difficult and sublime counsels of perfection may be applied to the ordinary circumstances of everyday life. When we call to mind the requirements of God's law ; when we think of the virtues He expects us to practise, as viewed in the abstract, we are sometimes in danger of allowing feelings of discouragement to possess our souls ; and may even persuade ourselves that such heroism is not for us. We argue that heroic perfection is beyond our strength and that it were useless, if not presumptuous, to attempt it. Now, in

order to dissipate such a false and mischievous notion, and to inspire us with fresh hope, the Church reminds us of the many hundreds of thousands of her children who have not only saved their souls, but who have scaled the loftiest heights of sanctity. I refer to those many virgins, widows, confessors, and martyrs whom she has canonised, and whose names are venerated in every Catholic land. She seeks to take each one of us singly by the hand, and to say, with all the tenderness and solicitude of a mother : My child, be not afraid ; be not dismayed. Consider these heroes, and while you are lost in admiration of their virtues, and while you wonder at their purity, their zeal, their generosity, and their lives of penance, remember that they were of the same flesh and blood as you are. Yes ! they, like you, were born in sin ; they no less than you carried about with them the germs of spiritual death. They had the self-same difficulties, the self-same temptations, and the self-same evil passions and rebellious appetites to overcome, and the like fierce enemies to contend against. The world held out to them the same seductions, the flesh offered them the same pleasures, and the devil breathed the same rebellious and proud suggestions in their ears. Yet they overcame. They resisted manfully, and by God's grace and co-operation they triumphed over every obstacle, and are now enjoying the eternal felicity of heaven.

My brethren ! God's arm is not shortened. He is as able and as willing to befriend *us*, as He was to befriend *them*. What He did for them He will

not refuse to do for us. Then why do you hesitate ? Why are you troubled and afraid ? If you fail, then blame your own cowardice and pusillanimity, for God's grace is never wanting. Such seems to be the language of the Church. Sometimes it is a great warrior, like St. Sebastian, to whom the Church draws our attention. Sometimes it is the Founder of a renowned religious Order like St. Benedict or St. Dominic ; at other times it is a labouring man, like St. Isidore, or even a beggar and a vagrant like Blessed Benedict Labré ; for there is no condition or station of life, however exalted or however lowly, that has not its representatives among the heroes of the Church. To-day it is a king that the Church sets before us, and proposes for our veneration, in order to show that virtue, even heroic virtue, is not incompatible with regal splendour, and all the glamour and worldly surroundings of a court. To tread even the most ordinary paths of life in innocence and faith is deserving of praise, but to maintain one's balance, and to keep one's feet from slipping, when poised on the giddy elevation of a throne, is far more admirable. The saint whose feast we celebrate to-day, Edward the Confessor, held the highest position in the land, since he was England's true and lawful sovereign. Yet, though he was set above every one else in the kingdom, he was perhaps the humblest of them all. Amid the many dangers that surrounded him he preserved the purity and humility of his heart. He fully recognised the responsibilities of his position, and how he would one day have to render a full account to God. He knew

that it is far safer to be in subjection than in authority ; to be ruled over than to rule ; and that a king must ever recognise that he exists for the sake of the people, and not the people for the sake of the king. Hence we find no traces of a vain and grasping ambition, or any hankering after power. So far from oppressing his subjects or grinding them down with taxes and exactions to feed his evil passions and to gratify his lust or ambition, or even to carry on unjust laws, he sought rather to remove their liabilities and to lighten their burdens, and to render the position of the poor easier and more tolerable. Again and again he sacrificed himself and his own interests for the sake of the people he loved so well. Thus, for instance, he remitted the Danegelt, a tax which had oppressed his subjects for many years, and other similar exactions. So little was he influenced by the spirit of avarice and the love of gold that he even refused money that was offered him. " On a certain occasion the lords of the kingdom, understanding that the king's exchequer had been exhausted by his excessive alms, raised a large sum among their vassals, and presented it as a gift to the king." St. Edward, surprised to see such a heap of money gathered into his exchequer, returned thanks to his affectionate subjects, but could not be prevailed to accept it. He expressed a great horror of what he calls a " pillaging of the poor," and commanded that it should be restored to those who had given it, even to the last farthing. There is no time to dwell upon each of his virtues in detail, so we must content ourselves with referring to

one or two only. Let us take his humility, faith, and obedience in so far at least as they refer to his attitude towards the Holy See, and to Christ's Vicar on earth, the Pope. St. Edward was a Catholic, consequently he acknowledged the supreme authority of the Holy See in all spiritual matters. He knew and confessed that Christ had built His imperishable Church on St. Peter, that impregnable rock against which the waves of error ever and ever beat, but ever and for ever beat in vain. He knew, further, that loyalty to St. Peter and to his successors is the very token and sign of a true Christian and the very touchstone of orthodoxy. All this he knew because he was a Catholic. But he was more than a mere ordinary Catholic ; he was an exceptionally fervent and zealous Catholic, in fact a saint. Consequently his loyalty to St. Peter, in the person of the Pope, Leo IX., was of a more magnanimous and a more deeply loyal kind than is found among the less perfect. There was something of the heroic about it. He revered the Pope as the highest ecclesiastical authority on earth, he honoured and loved him as the divinely appointed representative of Christ Himself, His vicegerent and *alter ego*, and he looked to him for direction and counsel in all that concerned his soul. Though Edward himself wore the crown of kingly authority, he was fully aware that his kingdom was of this world, and of this world alone. In the Pope he recognised the possessor of a sublimer prerogative, and saw in him a sovereign whose kingdom is not material but spiritual. Edward laid no claim, as Henry VIII.

did, to a supremacy over Church as well as State, but frankly and joyously admitted that in all things relating to the spiritual and supernatural order he was as much bound to obey the Pope as the least of his subjects. There is indeed something extremely touching and beautiful in this humble devotedness of our great king towards the Sovereign Pontiff. Not content with writing to his Holiness, or even with sending messages expressive of his affection and loyalty, he had bound himself by solemn vow, while still an exile in Normandy, that if God should ever restore him to his kingdom, he would, in gratitude, set out on the long and perilous journey to Rome, in order that he might kneel at the tomb of the Apostles, SS. Peter and Paul, and receive from the Pope himself the Apostolic Benediction. To realise all that this vow meant, we must bear in mind that, in those far-off days, travelling was very different to what it is now. There were no swiftly-gliding trains, running on smooth rails right through the continent of Europe, with their buffets and their dining-cars and their luxurious accommodation. No! the journey to Rome was long and tedious and full of peril. Travellers were jolted along the rough, stony roads in huge, cumbersome carriages without springs, and drawn by horses, often sunk up to their fetlocks in mud. There were no tunnels, so they were compelled to clamber by slow and difficult stages not *through*, but over the great mountain passes of the Alps, and to contend with snowdrifts, storms, and blinding hail. When a man left England for South Europe in those days his

friends were wont to bid him farewell with tears in their eyes, and followed him to the shore with many an anxious prayer, since it was well known that they who set out to distant lands were sometimes never seen again. In such expeditions many perished from the cold, or from wild beasts, or from footpads and banditti, and were never heard of any more, so that it required singular courage to face all the dangers and privations of the journey. Yet St. Edward resolved to go; and he would undoubtedly have carried out his resolve had not difficulties arisen within his own kingdom that seemed to demand his vigilance and close personal attention. His nobles and advisers gathered round him. They drew an alarming picture of the storm that was brewing, of the social disturbances and civil war that seemed to be threatening the land, and pointed out what an opportunity would be given to any intending usurper if the king were to absent himself in a foreign land. Finally, they declared it was his duty to remain at his post and protect and watch over his kingdom. The king loved his people intensely, and his only wish was to do his duty to God. He was loath to give his advisers pain, so he hearkened to their earnest entreaties and consented to remain, but only on one condition, viz., that the Holy Father should absolve him from his oath. He felt he had no right to decide the point himself, but he would appeal to the decision of him to whom our Lord had said, not only "Whatsoever thou shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven," but also "Whatsoever thou shall loose on earth shall be loosed in

heaven." Accordingly Ælred, Archbishop of York, and Herman, Bishop of Winchester, with two Abbots, were despatched to Rome to consult the Pope. We have in this incident another proof of King Edward's loyalty to the Holy See and to the Chair of Peter. The king's messengers put the case before the Pope, and Leo IX., after commending the king's piety, released him from his oath, and commuted it into something more feasible. Instead of visiting the tomb of the apostles, the King was ordered to build or restore a church and monastery in honour of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, and to give to the poor the sum he would have expended on his journey. The money was immediately distributed, and if we wish to see how faithfully he carried out the second part of the condition, we have but to turn our eyes to the great Abbey of Westminster, where his mortal remains await the general resurrection. For hundreds of years after St. Edward's death the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Divine Office continued to be said in Westminster Abbey; and had England not apostatised from the true Church, and broken from the unity of Catholic Faith, the old fane would still, even at this date, be resounding with the voices of Benedictine monks singing the praises of God, in the sonorous Latin tongue, in union with the rest of the Church throughout the world. There is, thank God, no sadness nor grief in heaven; but if there were, the good King Edward would assuredly weep scalding tears over the desecration of his ancient Abbey, now cold and bare and empty and desolate

because our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is no longer there. Let us lift up our hearts and minds to him to-day and beg his powerful intercession and that of the other grand old Anglo-Saxon saints, that England may one day be restored to the true faith and the old religion that was her glory for over a thousand years.

If England were only Catholic, to-day the venerable Abbey would not be able to contain the thousands of devout worshippers that would flock to the church, there to assist at the solemn High Mass offered to God, in honour of the saint, and in thanksgiving for all the graces heaped upon him. The ancient walls would reverberate with the sound of his praises ; then the procession would form, and his sacred remains, enshrined in the costliest reliquary that money could buy, would be reverently lifted on men's shoulders, and borne along in triumph through Parliament Square and Whitehall and the chief streets of London. King Edward's name would be lovingly invoked and his prayers humbly asked by a grateful people. But England is still Protestant, and she is afraid of honouring those whom God so honours, and will not ask their protection ; and nothing will be done except by us Catholics.

#### RESOLUTION.

Let us then address our prayers to him, and endeavour to prove our love by walking in his footsteps, and trying to acquire something of his humility, charity, faith, generosity, and especially something of his loyalty to the Holy See.

## ST. PATRICK

“ From one spark there cometh a great fire.”—  
Eccles. xi. 34.

**D**EAR brethren, and faithful children of St. Patrick, our divine Lord tells us in the holy Gospels that the Kingdom of Heaven—by which is meant the Church—is “ like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened ” (Matt. xiii. 33). The three measures of meal represent the human race, that is to say man, with his three faculties of will, memory, and understanding. The leaven is Jesus Christ Himself, who hid away His divine nature from human observation in the weakness of our poor human nature, till He, little by little, leavened the whole mass. Or, to use a somewhat different metaphor, He came upon earth, as the true “ Sun of Justice,” and by His divine presence scattered the darkness of infidelity and paganism, so that in a short time the entire world was permeated and penetrated by the light of His countenance. Now how did Christ produce such a marvellous transformation? Not by mere human persuasion; not by arguing and debating; not by a parade of worldly learning; but by a clear, simple, plain statement of His doctrines. He preached “ as one having authority.” He was

believed, because He not merely declared Himself to be the Son of God sent by His heavenly Father, but because He was able to produce His credentials. He pointed to His works, to His miracles, to the prodigies He wrought, as proofs of who He was, and whence He had come. In a word, He manifested, in the most open and palpable manner, that He was worthy of credence, and that He might be trusted ; after which He did not reason nor argue, but simply taught. And men believed his doctrines because they saw his miracles. “ No man can do the things that this man doth.” But Christ was not destined to remain for ever as our visible teacher, so He appointed others, chosen by Himself, to take His place, and to hand down the torch of truth from one to the other right down the centuries. Upon these He conferred a greater or lesser share in His own power, according as He saw it to be necessary. These, in their turn, consecrated others, and so the supply of teachers and Bishops was kept up, and will be kept up to the end of time. To these early apostles and missionaries Christ promised not only His grace and co-operation, without which man is utterly helpless and incapable, but He declared that they who were destined to come after Him would display even a yet greater power : that though He had worked wonders, they would work greater wonders ; and that though He had performed miracles, they would perform yet more startling miracles. “ The works that I do, they also shall do ; and *even greater than these shall they do* ” (John xiv. 12).

Now Ireland was not, of course, one of the lands visited by our Lord, yet that fair emerald, set in the northern sea, was clearly present to His mind, and its interests and its welfare were dear to His heart, so that in the fulness of time He raised up a great apostle, St. Patrick, who should do for the Irish what St. Paul did for the Gentiles, and what St. James did for the Spaniards, and what St. Boniface did for the Germans, and what St. Augustine and his companions did for the English ; an apostle who should descend upon the country with all the power and the zeal and the strength of an Elias, and should win its inhabitants from idolatry and superstition to the knowledge of the true God, and transform the whole island from an island of unbelievers into an island of saints. How was this to be accomplished ? Not by any mere human cunning or learning, but by the power of God alone.

Not only every individual conversion, but every step in the direction of supernatural truth and virtue is, and must ever be, God's own work. But God loves to work by means of poor human instruments, and to bestow His choicest graces and blessings through the feeble hand of men. This may be proved by a hundred instances out of Holy Scripture : thus, *e.g.*, when He determined to rescue His chosen people from the insupportable bondage and slavery of the Egyptians, He raised up *Moses*. When he wished to deliver the inhabitants of Bethulia from the cruelty and oppression of the dreaded Holofernes, His choice fell on the saintly *Judith*, who, by God's grace, encompassed his destruction, and crushed his

power. So again, when He deigned to deliver the world from the slavery of the devil and the galling chains of sin and crime, He picked out *twelve simple fishermen*. So, too, when God resolved—at a later date—to draw Ireland out of its pagan darkness into the glorious light of the Gospel, He raised up that marvellous Bishop and pastor and missionary, St. Patrick. By that divine Providence which controls all our destinies, He selected this wonderful apostle.

But, observe, my brethren, God not merely selects His instruments. Like a wise and prudent workman He also prepares them, and educates them, and *fits them for the task* with which He is going to entrust them. The renowned apostles, famous missionaries, and zealous heroes who have converted, not merely individuals, but whole peoples and nations, have invariably been saints and men of consummate virtue. And surely this is what we might well expect. When a man wishes to cut his name deep and clear upon glass or upon any other hard surface, he selects for the purpose not any ordinary substance that may come to hand, but the most precious of all precious stones, viz., the diamond. Similarly, when God wishes to cut His all-hallowed Name deep and clear on the hearts and minds of a people or a nation, He chooses His instrument; no ordinary priest, no common missionary, but one carefully formed and fashioned after His own heart, and as far removed above other priests as a diamond is removed above other stones.

You, dear faithful Irish people, children of St. Patrick, need not to be reminded of the trials and

hardships, and the captivity that God allowed St. Patrick to suffer *in order to purge and purify* and sanctify him even from his early youth, as gold is purified and rendered more precious in the searching fires of the furnace. You well remember how, like another Joseph, he was sold into slavery, when a mere boy of sixteen, and brought to Ireland from across the sea. You can picture him to yourselves, even at that early age, full of zeal and fervour, abandoning himself without fear into the hands of God : pure and unsullied amid the moral filth of paganism, as a lily among thorns ; given to much prayer and watching and self-imposed penance. Yes. And so he continued till God had sufficiently prepared him for the great work which he was raised up to accomplish. We have not time now to tell the history of his liberation from slavery, nor of the events that crowd in between that fact and the time of his ordination to the priesthood, and his consecration as Bishop. Let it suffice to say that, being duly ordained, moved by the spirit of God, he travelled all over the island, penetrated into every part, and met everywhere with a success nothing short of miraculous. Hundreds and thousands were stirred by his burning words, and touched to the quick by his virtues and example. A single spark, if it be real true fire, will suffice to ignite an entire mass, so that the flames will spread and spread, till every part is blazing. In the case of Ireland, St. Patrick was that spark, a spark of living, glowing, spiritual fire, which set the whole country from end to end in a mighty conflagration, and gave, within an incredibly

short time, an entire nation to the one true Church. Ireland *before* St. Patrick landed on her shores, and Ireland *after* his blessed soul returned to God, are two totally different countries. They who before had no knowledge of the true God, and who worshipped unclean things, became numbered among the chosen people of God. The sons and daughters of kings and princes turned their backs on the world, to dedicate themselves to the service of their Maker in the practice of continual prayer and penance. In the words of a modern historian, "In the history of the Church, there has been *no other example of a heathen nation, in the lifetime of one man*, springing up into the maturity of the Christian life."

"Before long," remarks Jocelyn, an ancient writer of merit, "there was no desert, no spot, no hiding-place in the island, however remote, which was not peopled by monks or nuns ; so that throughout the world Ireland was justly distinguished by the extraordinary title of the Island of Saints ; for they lived according to the rule imposed upon them by St. Patrick, in contempt of the world, and in desire of heaven, in holy mortification of the flesh, and renouncement of self-will, rivalling the monks of Egypt in merits and in numbers, and by word and example they were a light to foreign and distant lands."

We may generally form a fairly accurate estimate of a workman's ability and skill by a careful examination of his work. So one may form some idea, at least, of the virtue and exalted sanctity of St. Patrick by the transformation that his presence

produced in the country of his adoption. Were we asked to *explain the secret* of St. Patrick's success, we should answer that it was due, above all, to two things : firstly, to his close union with God—itself the fruit of constant prayer and mortification—and secondly to the unusually large share of His own divine power which God was pleased to delegate to him. Suffer me to explain. Every priest, duly appointed, is a minister of God, and, as such, receives a share in certain sublime powers which, by right, belong to God alone. To every priest God delegates, for instance, the power of forgiving sins, the power of consecrating the Sacred Elements, that is to say, of changing common bread into the adorable body of Christ ; and the power of raising the spiritually dead to spiritual life, and so forth. But in addition to these powers, God often confers other powers, I will not say *greater* powers, because they are not really greater, but merely more unusual powers—upon apostolic men, especially in the early ages of the Church. He frequently, indeed I think I may say habitually, conferred upon those who were engaged upon the conversion of the heathen, the gift of working miracles. Now it would seem that to St. Patrick He delegated a far larger share of His own divine prerogatives than to most saints. He invested him with a certain authority over the very laws of nature, and made material things subject to him, in a degree far surpassing our own experience, so that St. Patrick could, for example, still the wind and the waves, and stay the course of the most violent tempest ;

he could, like another Moses, divide the waters, and compel them to stand up on both sides, so that his friends could walk between in safety ; he could both cure diseases and inflict them in punishment, and had dominion even over the dead, being able, by a word, both to kill and to bring to life. Let me mention just *two instances* recorded in his life ; the first relates to the curing of a bodily affliction, and the second to his power over death. A certain blind man, seated, perhaps, by the side of the road, like the blind man in the Gospel, hearing a sound of approaching feet, inquired what it might mean. He was informed that it was no less than St. Patrick himself that was coming along, followed by a crowd. At once the poor man, in spite of his blindness, got up on his feet and attempted to run along in the direction of the sound, hoping to recover his sight. In his anxiety he hurried on, staggering and stumbling, now falling over obstacles, now picking himself up again ; for he had no one to assist him. Upon this, one of the young ecclesiastics in the saint's company burst out laughing, and began to jeer and to make fun of the unfortunate man. St. Patrick was filled with a holy indignation at such unfeeling conduct, and as a warning to those around he first chastised him with his own hand, and then said : “ Amen, I say to you, that in the name of God, the eyes of this man, now shrouded in darkness, shall see the light, while your own, that are open to evil, and provoke others to mockery, shall be closed.” He thereupon made the sign of the cross on the eyes of the blind man, and by one

and the same act the blind man was restored to sight and the jesting and pitiless cleric was reduced to blindness. Naturally, a person endowed from on high with powers such as these will inspire fear and reverence, and be listened to with faith.

But let me tell you of a yet more terrible judgment that overtook a chief named Mackyle. Mackyle was the chief of a famous band of robbers who infested the neighbourhood of Ulster, and were a scourge to all the country around. It chanced one day that St. Patrick journeyed into those parts, but as soon as Mackyle heard of it he determined to make away with the saint whose doctrine and example were so opposed to his unholy profession. On second thoughts, however, he felt it would be a dastardly and cowardly thing to murder a defenceless man, so he made up his mind to have some fun at the saint's expense, and to bring both him and his mission into ridicule. With this end in view he persuaded one of his subordinates, named Garban, to pretend to be dead, so that they might in mockery call upon St. Patrick to restore him to life, and then laugh at him for his pains. Accordingly, Garban was laid out as a corpse, and acted his part as well as he could, remaining perfectly still and motionless. His companions then threw a pall over him, and, running off to the saint, entreated him to come and call the poor dead robber back again to life. The saint knew by divine revelation all that had passed. He came, however, at their bidding, prayed for a short time over the supposed corpse, and then went on his way. As soon as he had gone the robbers

went up to the bier and pulled off the pall. To their horror and consternation they found that, instead of Garban, there was nothing but his dead body! His soul had departed. Their fear, dismay, and remorse may readily be imagined. With one accord the whole band rushed after the saint, and, throwing themselves on their knees, implored forgiveness for their sin, and the life of their companion. St. Patrick, seeing the genuineness of their sorrow, took pity on them. By the power of God he gave life again to the dead, upon which Garban and all his associates believed and were baptised, and became true and faithful children of the Church. I may mention, in passing, that the leader of the band, viz., Mackyle, not only repented, but entered the ecclesiastical state, and became first a priest and then a Bishop, with the Isle of Man for his diocese. His memory was held in great veneration, both in the British and in the early Irish Churches. Surely such marvellous powers as St. Patrick wielded might well influence and overawe any people, but especially a people as emotional and as easily affected as the Irish.

To stand by and to witness the tempest and the storm hushed into silence like a crying child at the sound of his voice; to see the sick grow well at his touch and the dead arise and walk at his bidding; to behold him with one's own eyes doing what no mortal man can do without God's special help, would naturally inspire the heart of the boldest with fear and admiration and with an immense reverence, and would throw one into a disposition best calculated

to induce one to accept in childlike confidence the doctrine that fell from his lips. It was my intention to say something of his love of prayer and mortification, those two characteristics of every true saint; but time will not permit. I will merely observe that St. Patrick's gift of prayer was very remarkable, while his penances make one almost shudder even to think of. He spent most of the night in close converse with God, and was particularly fond of repeating the Psalms of holy David. When at last he did compose himself to sleep, it was stretched on the hard rock clothed with rough haircloth, and with a stone for his pillow. Yet he laboured incessantly, and attained to the patriarchal age of a hundred and twenty years. "If," exclaims one of his biographers, "we had faith in prayer like that of St. Patrick there would be no mysteries in this life. It was by prayer that he converted the Irish nation, it was by prayer he both legislated and obtained obedience to his laws, and it was by prayer that he organised the work of God, and built up His spiritual kingdom." If, dear brethren, we wish to honour so glorious a saint, if we wish to follow him, even though it be at a great distance, let us endeavour to become men of prayer. If we strive to imitate St. Patrick in his love of prayer, in his unwavering trust in the power of prayer, and in his constancy and perseverance in the habit of prayer, we shall be not only honouring the saint, but we shall obtain all things from Almighty God, we shall receive light to know and grace to do, and shall advance daily more and more in virtue until at last we shall be found worthy

to be admitted into the society of the saints and angels of God, there to rejoice for evermore. May St. Patrick's powerful voice be raised on our behalf before the throne of God, and may he obtain mercy upon all of us poor sinners still tossing on the dangerous ocean of this life. Amen.

#### RESOLUTION.

Let us return thanks to God for having raised up this glorious saint, and do our utmost to imbue ourselves with his spirit of love, devotion, and self-sacrifice.

## ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

“Of one spark cometh a great fire.”—Eccles. xi. 34.

**T**HOUGH more than six hundred years have rolled by since the great St. Francis rejoiced the earth by his presence, his memory is still as fresh as ever amongst us, while the fame of his sanctity has become more and more widely spread throughout the whole of the Christian world. We speak of him as Francis, for so he is generally called, though his true baptismal name was really John. Francis, we are assured by his biographers, was a mere nickname, which he won for himself when as a youth he assisted his father in his business. He often had dealings with French traders and merchants, and soon acquired such a readiness and fluency in French that his companions jocularly christened him “Français,” or, according to the orthography of those days, François, or, as we should say in our own language, Francis. This name has clung to the saint of Assisi ever since, and as in these days he would scarcely be recognised by any other, we must continue to speak of him as St. Francis and not as St. John. To attempt to set before you, in the time at our disposal, a complete sketch of the saint’s life would be worse than useless. What we shall do then is to select one of the more salient traits in his character, one of the virtues in which he more

especially excelled, and then try to draw from it some practical lessons.

His life is rich in virtues, but the most important and fundamental of them all is, I take it, humility. He seems, indeed, to come as a special example of lowliness to a world puffed up with pride, arrogance, ambition, and conceit. The present Holy Father by his wise words of commendation, and by the effort which he has made to propagate and to spread the Third Order, seems especially anxious to set before us the living example of this great saint. Nor is this to be wondered at, for the dominant note in almost all human society of the day is pride, self-sufficiency, and self-love. Men are impatient of all restraint; they chafe and rebel under the yoke of authority. They dislike the very idea of obedience and submission. Not only in worldly and political and social matters but even in religion itself they wish to decide everything for themselves and to make their own private reason the supreme judge and arbiter of all that is most sacred and most incomprehensible, even in the supernatural regions of divine faith and revelation. Every question is made to resolve itself into a personal one. It is always: "What I think; what I judge; what I decide; what I approve what appeals to my reason; and what satisfies my sense of propriety. Yes, that and that alone is right!" To a world reeling and intoxicated with pride the successor of Blessed Peter commends and offers the example and the practical teaching of St. Francis, with his poverty and his love of suffering, his rough garments, coarse food, and

simplicity of life, and his general indifference to all that the world esteems most. Even from the very first, humility seems to have marked out Francis for its own.

While his mother was in the pains of labour, and began to fear a fatal result, a pilgrim of grave and stately appearance came, led presumably by the impulse of Divine Providence, and knocked at the door. Hearing the state of the anxious mother, he simply said: "Let this woman be conveyed into a stable, and she will be immediately delivered." This was accordingly done. And what he foretold actually happened. So that, just as our Lady gave birth to our Divine Lord in a stable at Bethlehem, so it was the privilege of St. Francis also to be brought into the world in a spot equally poor, mean, and dishonourable. When he grew up he did not at once show any remarkable signs of exalted virtue. Full of high and buoyant spirits and of a very bright and cheery temperament, he was soon at the head of the young men of Assisi. He threw himself into the very vortex of pleasure, and was one of the foremost of them all in their games, their songs and merry parties, and in their amusements. He was well off, but he scattered his money about with a generous hand, for he cared little for wealth even in those days, except in so far as it enabled him to oblige his friends and to increase and win their love. One thing, however, seems pretty certain, and that is that during his most boisterous days he kept his heart and mind free from sensual pleasures, notwithstanding the licentious and sometimes immoral

example of his companions. His generous nature was constantly revealing itself even at this early period. Once, being much preoccupied and oppressed with business, he dismissed an unfortunate beggar with some asperity. But he had hardly done so when his conscience smote him, and he rushed after the man, and giving him an abundant alms, promised God never again to let anyone go away empty-handed so long as it was in his power to assist him. From this day he began to think still less of himself, and would be so moved by the sight of the sufferings and the miseries of the poor that, not content with loosening his purse strings, he would strip himself even of his fine clothes to cover their nakedness. Once, outside the walls of Assisi, he met a knight, of noble mien and stately appearance, but whose garments were all in tatters. Francis, touched by his condition, at once took off his own cloak and gave it to the impoverished stranger in exchange for his. He performed a very similar act of charity soon after in the piazza of St. Peter's, at Rome, exchanging his own clothes for the rags of one of the poor beggars. The utter unworldliness, the indifference to all that men esteem, and the undisguised contempt for mere gold and silver that soon began to characterise St. Francis, were most displeasing to his father, who was a rich merchant and prided himself upon his wealth and possessions, and who wished and expected his son to follow him in his profession, and to spend his years in labouring and toiling to increase his revenues and to exalt yet more his worldly position. Consequently, when

Francis not only showed no inclination for money-making, but even went further and expressed his desire of giving up the world and dedicating himself entirely to the service of his Divine Master, his father simply lost all patience. He not only treated him most cruelly, but finally exacted from him a complete and unconditional renunciation of his inheritance and of all claim to any part or share in his father's possessions. St. Francis was only too pleased. Money, that for which the world so struggles and strives ; that for which men are so ready to suffer almost anything, and to do almost anything. Money, the idol and the god of worldlings, St. Francis condemned and despised. Without a thought of the future, or any anxiety even about the present, without so much as one word of remonstrance, he at once assented to his father's infamous and unjust demand. In fact he interpreted his request even more literally than was expected, for he not only renounced his birthright, but, stripping himself of the very clothes he stood up in, he handed these, too, to his father, crying out with a holy enthusiasm : " Until now I have called you my father on earth, and now I can say with an undivided heart, ' Our Father Who art in Heaven.' Into His divine hands I place all my treasures ; in Him alone I centre all my trust." This scene took place in presence of the Bishop of Assisi, who was quite overcome with admiration at witnessing so vehement a love of God in one so young. The Bishop, shedding tears of emotion, clasped Francis to his breast. He wrapped his own great Roman

cloak about the youth, and bade his servants provide him with clothes. They gave him some poor rough garments belonging to one of the labourers in the Bishop's service, which Francis accepted with gratitude. Commenting upon this incident, St. Bonaventure, himself a great saint of the same Order, observes : " Francis, the servant of the great King, was stripped of everything, that he might follow after Him whom he loved—after his Lord who was Himself nailed naked to the cross. From this day Francis led a life of still greater poverty, hardship, self-denial, and obedience."

Such sanctity, as was natural, could not lie long hid. As the scent of some lovely flower will attract the bees, who will come in numbers to enrich themselves at such a prolific source of sweetness, so did the sweet odour of holiness draw devout men about the person of the great St. Francis, anxious to place themselves under his direction, and to draw from him the riches and treasures of divine wisdom with which he was so overflowing. He soon had a number of disciples, and in due course wrote for them a rule of life. The rule is based on the strictest poverty, on prayer, humility, and penance. It breathes from end to end evangelical perfection in all its excellence. The Brothers are to practise self-denial and detachment in everything. They are to be poor, owning neither property nor money. They are to live on alms, which they are to beg with humility, or else on the produce of their labour. They are to give themselves to prayer, to contemplation, and to long and severe fasts. And in

the midst of these voluntary austerities their charity is to be unalterable, their patience untiring, and their watchfulness over themselves unceasing. Should they be called to any office of authority in the Brotherhood, this very fact itself is to be regarded as a reason for being more meek, poorer, and more humble. The superiors are to consider themselves servants of the other Brothers, and there are to be no masters in the Order. The rule, of which we have given only a general idea, was in all humility submitted to the Sovereign Pontiff. He laid it before his Cardinals and advisers. Some of these considered it was scarcely practicable. They argued that the giving up of all property, both personal and in common, and for ever, was impossible. However, as Francis was invited to expound his views more at length, he took the opportunity to point out that he was only relying on the Providence of God, as Christ had Himself counselled. This he did, as our Lord might have done, viz., by means of the following parable or story.

In a lonely spot in a certain desert there lived, said St. Francis, a poor virgin of exceeding great beauty. The king of the land saw her, and being enamoured of so much loveliness, made her his wife. For some years he lived with her in the desert, and she bore him many children, who, while possessing all the charms of their mother, bore a strong resemblance also to the king. The monarch then left the desert and returned to his home and palace, while the mother provided for the children. When, however, they were grown up she sent them to the

king, informing them that he was their father, and should provide for all their needs. The king received them with ineffable love, and recognised and acknowledged them as his own sons and daughters, and said: "Of course I shall give you all you require. If I bestow my gifts upon my officials and servants, how much more upon my own beloved children! Fear not, but trust implicitly in me." Without being the actual words, this was, in substance, the parable. Then followed its application or interpretation. The beautiful virgin, living in the desert of this world, is Poverty. God, the King of kings, saw her, and being fascinated by her charms, came down from Heaven, and united Himself to her, *i.e.*, to Poverty, in His humble crib at Bethlehem. He begot many children by her in the desert of this world—apostles, anchorites, monks, hermits, and a vast multitude of others who have cheerfully shared the voluntary poverty of our Lord. Christ has raised Poverty and given it a royal dignity by uniting it to Himself. This Poverty, as a royal mother, sends her children to the King—that is to say, to God their Father—who receives them and promises to provide for their support. "If," says this mighty King, "if I feed and clothe even those who are aliens, who are not even of the one true fold, yea, if I make My sun to shine on the just and the unjust and cause My fruit-yielding rains to fall on good and bad alike, how much more readily shall I provide for the wants of those who have abandoned all things to follow Me, and who place all their trust, not in human\_cunning

and industry, but in My Providence, which feeds the birds of the air and clothes the flowers of the field." Thus, in words of simple yet persuasive eloquence, St. Francis disarmed all opposition to his scheme, and was allowed to found his Order with the full approval of ecclesiastical authority and the most earnest blessing of the Pope. Whatever hesitation or doubt may have lingered in the minds of the Cardinals of the 13th century as to the prudence and wisdom of the Rule, the history of the Order during the past six hundred years has proved it to be both wise and practical. The number of Franciscans soon rose from tens to hundreds, and from hundreds to thousands. Their rough brown habits are now seen in every country. Their monasteries or friaries are established in all quarters of the globe. England herself owes them a debt of gratitude she can never repay. They came into this country as long ago as 1224, and established themselves in Canterbury in London, and at Oxford ; from these places, as from three great centres, they overflowed into other parts of the country, so that within thirty years of their arrival, we are told by Mr. Brewer, their numbers in England alone amounted to over a thousand, distributed among forty-nine different convents or friaries up and down the land. They preached and taught, and spent themselves in the service of all, but more especially in the service of the poor. Nor were they content merely to labour and suffer for the good of the Church. When evil times came, and the storm of persecution burst over England, they were among the foremost to

defend the faith and the authority of the Holy See. They showed that they could practise as well as preach, and suffer as well as argue. In the reigns of Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth the faithful followers of St. Francis were to be found in the prisoners' cell and on the scaffold. The names of Blessed John Forest, who was burned to death at Smithfield for the faith ; of Henry Heath, who was dragged to Tyburn and there hanged, then cut down and disembowelled and quartered ; of Arthur Bell, who was also hanged, then cut down alive and stripped and cut open, his heart and intestines being thrown into the fire and his body quartered, one quarter being hung on each of the four chief gates of the city : these and many others, whom we have not time to speak of now, died martyrs to the true faith in England. Their successors are, thank God, still in our midst. They are living in happier and more peaceful times ; but while we accept their ministrations and rejoice at the excellent work they are doing in this country, let us remember that, after God, it is all due to the seraphic St. Francis of Assisi, who in his poverty and humility founded the Order. "The vaster and the mightier the building we wish to erect," says St. Gregory, "the deeper and the lower must we sink the foundation." If this be so, then we may judge of the profundity of St. Francis' humility by the magnitude of the Order that he established and the prominent position it now occupies in the Church. Thus from one spark there has come a great fire. The burning love in the heart of one man enkindled a fire of zeal in the hearts of tens of thousands of his followers.

## RESOLUTION.

Let us place before us the example of St. Francis. Let us learn of him the spirit of true poverty and humility. He will teach us to esteem the friendship and the approval of God as the highest of all riches, and the nearer we draw to him and the more closely we imitate him, the nearer we shall find ourselves to our Lord Himself, the Master and Model of all saints, who came to teach us all humility and meekness. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

# ST. TERESA

## OR

### THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

“My mind hath contemplated many things wisely, and I have learned.”—Eccles. i. 16.

**T**HE Life of the Seraphic St. Teresa, at least in its general outline, is probably well known to you all. For each year, as the feast comes round, her panegyric is preached and her praises are sounded with a regularity that, by this time, may possibly be getting somewhat monotonous.

Instead, therefore, of going over the old ground, and repeating the well-known incidents of her life, we will take this opportunity to speak of a subject, intimately connected with St. Teresa indeed, but yet very imperfectly understood, and still less appreciated by the world at large, and that is the Contemplative Life.

St. Teresa was a member, and a most distinguished member, of a great Contemplative Order, viz., that of the Carmelites. She, in fact, it was who infused fresh vigour into it when it showed signs of languishing, and who helped to bring it back to its original fervour. Further, she opened out many new convents, and established fresh foundations. And even now, though she has long since gone to her

reward, many hundreds and thousands of holy souls are still attracted by her example, her stirring words, and her most persuasive writings, to leave the world and all its vanities in order to dedicate themselves entirely to the service of God as Carmelite nuns.

Now, what do we understand by the Contemplative Life? The answer we shall receive to that query will, of course, depend upon the particular authority we consult. If we ask the world, it will tell us that it is a life of useless indolence and of wasteful selfishness. For the world is incapable of appreciating the things of God, and has no relish for the supernatural. As the Holy Spirit of God informs us: "The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand" (1 Cor. ii. 14).

And the more distinctly and essentially supernatural a vocation is, the more foolish it will appear, and the more completely will it be lifted up above the understanding and the admiration of the worldly minded.

Unhappily, there are some Catholics, even, who fail to realise the beauty and the sublimity of the contemplative life. Living in the world, and breathing its contaminated atmosphere, they allow themselves (often unconsciously) to be influenced by its opinions, till they come at last to view things from the world's low and all too natural standpoint. The result is, many regard the strictly enclosed Orders with but little favour, if not with actual suspicion.

Now, the Active Orders, that is to say, those

engaged in various philanthropic works, are, they will say, all very well. Those they can understand. Hence they are kind enough to approve of the Sisters of Charity, who do so much good among the poor and the orphaned, and who are found administering to the sick and dying in the hospitals or on the battlefield. For similar reasons they will approve of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, the Sisters of Nazareth, the Little Sisters of the Poor, and of the Holy Child, and so forth. These they can understand, because in one way or another they make themselves *obviously* useful.

But as for Carmelites, Poor Clares, Trappists, and Carthusians, and such like, they can see no good in them at all. "What use are they?" they ask. "What wasted lives! How idle and unprofitable, inane and selfish! Would it not be far better for them to throw down their grills and iron bars and enclosures, and come out into the world, and help their fellow creatures in their struggles and their difficulties?"

Have we not sometimes heard such opinions expressed? Have we not often had to listen with pain and disappointment to worldly-wise Catholics giving vent to such unchristian and to such false sentiments? To be sure we have, and that not unfrequently.

Alas! Alas! Such expressions of opinion disclose a lamentable dullness and an utter want of spiritual perception and insight. The fact is, such persons have become tainted by their intercourse with the unbelieving world. The world, says the

apostle, is "the enemy of God." The world believes in nothing but what it can see, and measure, and weigh, and take stock of. It judges only by visible and tangible results. In a word, it cannot bring itself to conceive that any real good is being effected, or that anything of real value is being achieved, unless there be a good deal of display and commotion, and much talk and advertising, and blowing of trumpets.

The true Church of God, guided by the Holy Spirit, judges by a totally different standard. If indeed the Church lovingly approves, and highly esteems *all* religious Orders, she esteems none so highly as those which are wholly given up to prayer and penance. At first sight this may appear strange to us, but nevertheless, if we will give the matter a little earnest thought, perhaps we shall come to realise better the wisdom of her judgment.

The very root and essence of the Contemplative Life is Prayer and Penance. In these two exercises the members of a Contemplative Order may be said to spend the whole of their time. Prayer and penance form the web, the warp, and the woof of their existence. They constitute their very *raison d'être*. Now bear in mind that prayer, especially prayer accompanied by mortification, is of quite priceless worth to the Church, and brings down countless graces and blessings upon the world. It is a golden key which unlocks the treasury of heaven. It melts the heart of God, and lets loose the rich torrents of divine favours. Even when nothing else is of any avail, prayer and penance possess a

wonderful power to move God to have patience, to pardon, and to restore to favour. In proof of this, it is enough to recall the names of Abraham, of Moses, of Elias, of Judith, and of countless great prophets and leaders of God's people. They wrung favour after favour from the heart of God, and caused Him again and again to show mercy and to spare His sinful people.

Now, the Contemplative Orders seem to hold a similar brief in the Church of God. These Contemplatives have utterly broken with the world. They stand apart from the active, busy, distracted, toiling multitudes. Like Moses, they have gone up into the mountain, and by their ardent prayers and sighs and tears and entreaties and sacrifices, they stay the hand of God, ready to strike a dissolute world, and call down incalculable benefits upon the Church.

Perhaps we cannot better or more beautifully and fittingly illustrate their office—both as regards its nature and its efficacy—than by referring to an incident, recorded of Moses and Aaron and Hur, in the Book of Exodus (Chapter xvii.).

The chosen people of God were being attacked by Amalec and his army. While they were fighting against them in the plain, Moses went up into the mountain. There he lifted up his hands to heaven in supplication for them, and besought Almighty God to give them the victory. Now, the Holy Scripture narrates that the *fortunes of the battle varied, according to the earnestness of Moses' prayer*. So long as Moses continued to lift his hands up to heaven, and

to invoke the God of Battles, so long the Children of Israel prevailed. But if, through weariness or anxiety, Moses for a moment relaxed his efforts, the Israelites were driven back by the violence of Amalec and his troops.

Instead of the plain of Raphidim, where this contest took place, we have but to substitute the Catholic Church, spread throughout the world, engaged in constant warfare with the Powers of Darkness ; and, instead of Moses and his companions praying on the mountain top, we have but to substitute the devout communities of cloistered Religious, both of men and of women, and we shall soon begin to feel how very much depends upon them. For, their one chief duty and occupation is to make intercession for the millions struggling outside in the world—not indeed as the Israelites, against visible foes, but against their far more formidable spiritual enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh.

The loose and erroneous ideas that many entertain regarding Contemplatives arise from a false conception of the Church itself. They are wont to look upon the various members of the Church as isolated and independent units. They forget the teaching of St. Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost, concerning the nature and constitution of the Church. The Church is a single organism. It is one united whole, each member of which is closely knit together with every other member. The apostle cannot think of any fitter illustration than that of a living human body, in which every part is intimately connected and correlated

with every other, and with the whole. The Church, he tells us, is a Body, the mystical Body of Christ. It is composed of a great number of parts. Each part is distinct; yet each is co-ordinated and related. Each has its own function and office. The well-being of the whole is dependent upon each of its constituent parts performing the task entrusted to it efficiently and well.

No organ is complete in itself, or sufficient for itself; for each is destined to contribute its share to the well-being of the whole. The hand cannot say to the head: I stand in no need of you. The feet cannot say to the heart or to the brain: I have no need of you. No; as a matter of fact, the external and more conspicuous organs, and the visible active members and limbs, are by no means the most indispensable, or the most important and necessary. Quite the contrary. Of what use would be the most delicate hand, and the most adroit fingers, unless they were controlled and directed by a healthy brain, and nourished by a healthy stomach?

Similar questions might be asked of the mystical Body of Christ, the Church. If it be true that the faithful laity, the secular clergy, and the active Orders of men and women form important parts of this great organism, nevertheless, they do not constitute the entire Church. The Contemplatives are also members or organs of the self-same Body, and they too have their special work to do. Their share in the general work may not be so apparent nor so obvious. It may not be so appreciated by men in general, especially by worldly men, but

in sober truth it may possibly be even more important than that which falls to the ordinary rank and file. Indeed, it is our firm belief that those who are engaged in active work owe immeasurably more than they are aware of to the silent, hidden, cloistered Communities, whose names are seldom or never heard.

When Mary and Martha received our Lord into their house they both strove to do Him honour, and occupied themselves in entertaining their divine Guest. They both pleased Him, but it was Mary, the type of the contemplative life, and not Martha, the type of the active life, who received the higher encomium from Him and the stronger commendation. "Mary hath chosen the better part, and it shall not be taken from her."

The truly spiritual man will always recognise the immense value of prayer, even when unaccompanied by active efforts. Hard indeed would it be to determine to what extent the successes and the victories of those who are actively engaged in the sacred ministry, and in the saving of souls, are due to the prayers and penances of unknown and hidden souls.

A story is told of a famous Jesuit preacher, whose stirring words seemed to bring about the most extraordinary and unexpected conversions, and to produce the most admirable spiritual fruits. As so often happens in such cases, he, and no other, received all the credit. Being somewhat elated at the exceptional success of his well-turned phrases, and in danger of falling into the sin of pride, God

mercifully revealed to him that all the fruits of his labour were due, not to his learning, not to his splendid diction, not to his burning eloquence, not indeed to himself at all, but to the earnest heartfelt prayers of a humble and unobserved lay brother, who always accompanied him, and who poured out his soul to God, at the foot of the pulpit, while the famous preacher ascended into it, and held the congregation spellbound by his rousing and elegant periods.

This ought not to astonish anyone, for we must never lose sight of the fact that the whole work of convincing, converting, saving, and sanctifying is essentially a supernatural work. It depends, not at all upon purely human effort nor upon human eloquence and persuasion. It has very little to do with mere talking, and preaching, and writing, and fuss and bustle, though instrumentally all these things may contribute something towards it. What it really does depend on, is the action of the Holy Spirit, and the supernatural grace of God, and that, my dear brethren, is obtained far more directly and efficaciously by the prayer of the humble, "which pierces the clouds," especially if it be accompanied by an austere and mortified life, than by any efforts of our own. A man of deep personal holiness who has grown very, very dear to God, will do more for the salvation of souls by his power with God, upon whom, after all, everything depends, than a thousand lukewarm and self-seeking missionaries and preachers. The whole thing is a question of grace. Shall we obtain that more readily by feverish activity, or by fervent and frequent prayer?

When the late Bishop of Cochin China was consecrated, the first resolution he made was to found a convent of Carmelite nuns in his diocese. The governor, we are told, hearing of this, ventured to remonstrate with the Bishop, and expressed his surprise that his lordship should think of such a luxury as a convent of nuns before he had even secured a suitable house for himself, and other necessities. To this the Bishop replied, with true wisdom, "What you, sir, call a luxury, I consider a necessity. Ten enclosed Religious praying and doing penance continually will be of greater help here than twenty missionaries occupied in preaching."

This statement, as to the value of contemplative souls, in bringing about the conversion of sinners, and in spreading the Gospel, seems to receive confirmation from the accounts given of the glorious St. Teresa. She was herself the most conspicuous and shining example of a Contemplative, and her own life, so full of supernatural favours, is itself a startling instance of the power of persevering prayer. Few, very few active souls have won so many and such great favours from God, or done so much for the welfare of the Church and the sanctification of her children. Some foolish persons think that those who bury themselves within the four walls of the cloister are selfish, and concerned only about their own personal sanctification. St. Teresa teaches us the very opposite. Her love of her neighbour was exceptionally strong. Nor is the explanation difficult. Prayer and contemplation and a life of great mortification brought her ever nearer and nearer to God.

Her intense love of Him soon knew no bounds. As a *direct consequence*, His interests became her interests, His glory her one aim and ambition. Did He not desire the salvation of souls? Yea, even of the worst and most abandoned sinners! Did He not labour for them, suffer for them, die for them?

That was enough. Her great and noble heart catching fire, as it were, from its close contact with His burning heart, began to consume also with the most fervent desire to help her struggling brethren; especially sinners, faithless Catholics, and heretics.

She envied all those who were occupied in the work of saving souls. She thought more of those who had gone astray than of herself. Most gladly would she have given her life and all that she possessed to win one soul to God, to rescue one single brand from the burning. "Oh," she was wont to exclaim; "to make one step in the propagation of the faith, or to give one ray of light to heretics, I would readily forfeit a thousand kingdoms" ("Life," p. 158). In another place she cries out: "I believe I should count my life as nothing, if I might make others understand the truths of divine faith" ("Life," p. 150). On yet another occasion, referring to the lost souls, she writes: "Certainly I believe that to save even one from those overwhelming torments, I would most willingly endure many deaths."

We might quote many other similar expressions, but these few suffice to show us that so far from the heart of a true Contemplative being narrow and

egoistical, it is overflowing with love for men, and yearning to shower down upon them every grace and every blessing.

If the noble example of the glorious St. Teresa, whose feast we are now commemorating, has inspired us with a higher, and let me say, with a truer appreciation of the Contemplative Life ; if it has helped us to understand better all that we owe to the prayers and penances of those who have courage and heroism enough to embrace it and to practise it in all its perfection, then indeed we shall not have celebrated the feast in vain.

May she, who prayed so fervently and so efficaciously when on earth, pray for us, with yet greater effect, now that she is enjoying the Beatific Vision, and obtain for us that burning love of God and of our fellow creatures which consumed her own saintly heart.

#### RESOLUTION.

If we cannot become Contemplatives ourselves, let us at least learn to appreciate and to honour those upon whom this great gift is conferred. And let us resolve to turn aside, from time to time, from the feverish excitement and perpetual bustle and distractions of our own active lives, and spend a little time in the calm and serious consideration of eternal things. "Think of thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."

PART III  
MISCELLANEOUS



## THE DEVIL AND EVIL SPIRITS

“ Resist the devil, and he will fly from you.”—  
St. James iv. 7.

**T**HOUGH by the loving Providence of God we are all invited one day to occupy places in His heavenly Kingdom, yet we have to fight our way there, and to overcome many obstacles on the road, according to the words : “ Through many tribulations we enter into the Kingdom of God.” Now, our chief danger arises from the opposition of three great enemies, who rise up to dispute our passage. These are the devil, the world, and the flesh. And it is of these fierce and relentless foes that I propose speaking to you during the next three Sundays.

We may begin by considering the history of the devils, and how they first became our enemies. Call to mind, then, that for a measureless eternity God existed supremely happy indeed, yet in absolute unbroken solitude. Neither the heavens nor the earth existed, nor was there a single living creature stirring throughout all the infinite realms of possible space ! At last God resolved to exercise His almighty power, and to bring forth other beings, made to His own likeness. By a single word He surrounded Himself with a multitude of bright and beautiful angels. These were pure spirits, without any material organs

such as we have, and without any admixture of earthly matter. Though even the very least and lowest of them was beautiful beyond words, and endowed with rich and rare gifts, yet they were all different, and were divided into ranks and companies, one subordinate to another. How many did God create ? Well, no exact figure can be given, but it is the opinion of grave theologians that their number is vast beyond all computation. It probably far surpasses that of the entire human race, past, present, and still to come.

God created them as He created us, to be happy with Him for ever in Heaven ; yet, in their case, as in ours, they were first to be put upon their trial. Heaven was offered them, indeed, but on condition of their obedience. It was to come as the reward of virtue, and as a glorious and eternal crown purchased by victory over self. What was their trial ? The precise nature of it is not absolutely certain, but the general opinion seems to be that it consisted in calling upon them all to subject themselves to the authority of Jesus Christ Incarnate, and to acknowledge Him as their Lord and their God.

That is to say, it was revealed to them that God the Son would one day assume a nature inferior to their own, and become truly a man : and they were called upon to honour and reverence and worship and adore this Man, Christ, and to recognise in Him a Divine Person. This was a great trial for them. They, no doubt, contemplated their own exquisite gifts, their angelic natures, their freedom from all material and bodily forms, and then they found it

difficult to bring themselves to adore One who was to be clothed in human form, to be scourged, spat upon, crowned with thorns, hung on an ignominious cross, and finally to die an infamous death. How could they bring themselves to accept such a one as their God and their Sovereign? How could they consent to prostrate before Him and to acknowledge Him as King? Well, that, it is thought, was their trial. Would they obey or refuse to obey? They divided. Some remained loyal, others rebelled. The great majority, headed by the Archangel Michael, cried: "Quis ut Deus?" (Who is like to God?) and were ready to acknowledge and to worship Him, under any form, and under any disguise, even as a reputed malefactor, hanging on a cross. But an immense multitude, probably about a third, followed Lucifer, and refused to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. So far from recognising the absolute dominion of God, and acknowledging His right to supreme authority, Lucifer sought to exalt himself above his rightful station, and to become equal to God Himself. "I will ascend into heaven," he cried. "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, . . . I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High" (Isaias xiv. 14). Thus the trial proved too much for the virtue of Lucifer and his followers. They disobeyed and were cast headlong into the exterior darkness of the bottomless pit. In a word, their one deliberate act of pride and rebellion transformed them from angels into devils, deprived them of the friendship of God, and depraved their whole nature.

Their ignominious failure, as well as the appalling punishment that followed upon their crime, filled their hearts with bitterness, resentment, and hatred towards God. But, however fierce and revengeful they might be, they were well aware that they could do nothing directly against the Almighty. Nevertheless, they could show their hatred of God by attacking those whom God loved, and by defiling and destroying the work of His hands. They could attack man, and try to induce him to join with them in their rebellion. And, what is more, they were strongly induced to do so. For was not man their rival ? Was he not destined to occupy a place in that very heaven from which they had been ignominiously expelled ? Yea, even to ascend to the very thrones which they had forfeited by their sin. Hence, spurred on by envy and jealousy, they resolved to wage a continual war against the whole human race, and to use all their powers, their craft and cunning, to bring man into sin, that God's work might be frustrated, and that man might be condemned as they were, and share their awful fate. And, alas ! for us poor weak men. Their endeavours meet with a large share of success. The fallen angels are well able to injure us, when we, by our carelessness or apathy or disloyalty, forfeit God's sustaining grace and protection, for they are far more powerful than we are, when left to ourselves. They are immeasurably more intelligent and subtle and crafty and seductive, and their hatred of God, and consequently of us, exceeds all expression.

One of their most dangerous snares laid to catch

unwary souls, is what we call Spiritualism, which purports to put us in immediate communication with the spirits of our dear departed, though where real communications take place the agents are undoubtedly diabolic, rather than human. Although this is but a revival of a practice strongly condemned by God in the old Law (Deut. xviii. 9-12), yet it is becoming extremely common in these days, as the immense amount of current literature on the subject emphatically proves. In fact, the most recent computation puts the number of Spiritualists as over twenty millions.

Spiritualism, which is largely the product of evil spirits, "who wander through the world for the ruin of souls," and who lay their traps in all directions, is perhaps one of the most insidious foes of the true faith, which it is ever striving to supplant. Already thousands have succumbed to its poisonous influences. Led at first perhaps by no worse motive than an idle curiosity and a love of the marvellous, men and women have been inveigled into attending these spiritualistic séances. Little by little their interest and curiosity grow. At last they become captivated and enthralled, and so completely under its influence that they lose all sense of responsibility, and utterly disregard the most solemn duties of life. Even though God has strictly forbidden man "to consult spirits, or to seek the truth from the dead; for the Lord abhorreth all these abominations" (Deut. xviii), yet many disregard His warning, and frequent lectures and meetings, as though they might

disobey the divine command with impunity, and stand firm where stronger and wiser men have fallen miserably. It is surely of such that St. Paul speaks, when he foretold that "in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared" (1 Tim. iv. 1-2).

Of the unlawfulness of consulting mediums and of taking part in these séances there can be no manner of doubt. To a question put to the Congregation of the Holy Office, the answer came back : "To evoke the spirits of the dead, to receive answers from them, to seek knowledge of unknown facts, or of things happening at a distance, and all superstitious practices of this kind, is a deceit altogether unlawful and heretical, and a scandal against morality."

By attending spiritualistic meetings, Catholics disobey the Church, place themselves more and more within the power of Satan, and by exposing themselves unnecessarily to danger of sin, fall grievously, according to Christ's distinct warning : "who loves the danger shall perish in it."

This is, alas, no mere theory. We have actually known many persons whose will power has grown weak, and whose faith has become completely undermined, and who finally lost it altogether, because of their infatuation and mad attraction for Spiritualism. And what has been our experience is the experience of most other priests.

Of course God can restrain the devil and his agents

to any extent that seems good to Him. As we are taught in the Book of Job, evil spirits cannot molest us without His permission. But, as the same book clearly proves, God does allow the demons, within certain limits, to exercise their powers upon us. He allows them to tempt us, to entice us into sin, and to lead us from the path of justice and rectitude, and they are sure to succeed if we refuse to defend ourselves by prayer and penance and a continual watchfulness; according to the words, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." God allows this, because we are placed in this world for the express purpose of being tempted and proved. Indeed, we cannot receive the victor's crown unless we have gained a victory. We cannot gain a victory unless we have to fight, and we cannot fight unless we have foes to contend with. Further, it is by the means of fighting and struggling and overcoming that our virtue and our courage are exercised, and that we grow strong and valiant in God's service.

There have been cases in which the devil has actually appeared. Such cases are frequently met with in the lives of the canonised saints, but otherwise they are quite exceptional. The usual way in which the evil one seeks to bring about our destruction is by suggestion. He puts his mind in communication with our mind, much as a thought-reader might do.

He makes use of some subtle form of telepathy to insinuate into our minds evil thoughts and impure images. He excites our passions; arouses emotions of anger, jealousy, indignation, greed, lust, revenge,

hatred and the rest ; and countless is the number of his dupes and countless the number of his victims. Unless we are ever on our guard, and unless we keep close to God, and have recourse to prayer and the Sacraments, and the other means of grace, we shall inevitably fall an easy prey to his wiles and to his unscrupulous cunning, which can deceive even the most enlightened if they fail to appeal in all humility to God, whose grace alone can save them. We may infer as much even from what our Lord said to His own apostles : " Behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you " (Luke xxii. 31). And, " Without Me, you can do nothing." It is extremely important, my dear brethren, that we should recognise the presence of this bitter enemy of our salvation, who, St. Peter assures us : " Goes, about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour " (1 Pet. v. 8). Indeed, the consciousness that enemies are ever dogging our steps, and laying snares for our feet, ought to be enough to put us upon our guard, and to keep our hearts and our minds fixed upon the God of our salvation. No one knows this better than the devil himself.

Hence, his great aim in these days is to induce men to forget him, and not only to forget him, but even to deny his very existence and to treat it as an exploded superstition. It is a well-known fact that outside the Catholic Church thousands have entirely ceased to believe in the reality of a personal devil. I remember some few years ago being at a large gathering of non-Catholics, and some allusion was

made to the devil, upon which some laughed and said, "Surely you are not so old-fashioned as to believe in a personal devil?" "But," I replied, "are you not a Bible-Christian, and does not the Bible speak again and again of Satan, and Beelzebub and Lucifer? Are not the allusions to devils innumerable? Did not Christ cast out devils?" "Oh, yes," he rejoined, "of course I believe in devils, *in a sense*. But I do not for a moment allow that the devil is a being apart from ourselves." "Then what is he?" I enquired. "Oh, a devil," he answered, "is merely a sinful inclination within us, a tendency to evil, a wicked desire, a lustful appetite, etc." And, dear brethren, these are, in the opinion of worldly men, the only kind of devils that molest us. That Protestant acquaintance of mine did but express the opinion of thousands of others. The world, for the most part, has ceased to believe in the power and the malice and even in the existence of that being against which our Lord and His apostles never cease to warn us. Hence it is that the devil and his angels have gained such power and influence over men's lives in these days. But devils, or in other words, real, active, energetic spirits, do indeed exist, and in vast numbers, and they have to be resisted and overcome or they will most certainly lead us down to hell. The inspired Word of God is most explicit upon this point, and if this truth be rejected, then we must reject the whole Bible, and Christianity itself. Listen, for instance, to the great St. Paul. Addressing the Ephesians (vi. 11), he says: "Put on the armour

of God that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil." Here the apostle clearly points, not to an internal tendency, but to an external foe. In the next verse he is yet more explicit: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places." If there be any meaning whatsoever in the foregoing inspired words, it is, that about us and around us, and most certainly distinct from us, are gathered hosts of evil spirits, who will fight against us all our lives long, and encompass our destruction, unless we put on our spiritual armour, and "resist, strong in faith."

Besides these distinct statements we have many other arguments arising out of the inspired narrative, as, for instance, the story of the man with an unclean spirit, who appealed to Jesus to free him from his misery. And Jesus said: "Go out of the man, thou unclean spirit. Then He asked: What is thy name? And the spirit replied, My name is Legion, for we are many" (Mark v. 8, 9). Then Jesus drove the evil spirits out of the poor man. And "the spirits besought Him to allow them to enter into a herd of swine that were feeding close by. And Jesus gave them leave." As a consequence the devils entered into this herd of 2,000 swine, and were forthwith "carried with great violence into the sea, where they were all drowned." This narrative clearly proves that the devils are creatures quite distinct from our own evil feelings and rebellious inclinations. It shows that they are beings apart, who can

pass from one place to another, and from one creature to another, and, furthermore, that they are exceedingly powerful, and exceedingly numerous. But in addition to Holy Scripture the Church herself teaches to-day, as she has taught from the beginning, that the fallen angels are real persons, though incorporeal, who live and move in our very midst. They are here, indeed, for no benevolent purpose. Quite the contrary. As the Church teaches : They “ wander through the world, for the ruin of souls.”

Are we, my dear brethren, sufficiently sensible of their presence ? That is the all-important question. If it came to our knowledge that some human enemy were plotting against our corporal life, and seeking every opportunity to entrap and then to slay us, should we not take alarm ? Should we not watch and guard ourselves most carefully, and exercise every precaution ? Assuredly. Then how much more reason have we to arouse ourselves and to take precautions when we know that a whole army of fiends, far more insidious and powerful than any human foe, are seeking—not the life of our body, which by comparison, is of little worth, but the life of our soul. Watch over the avenues of your hearts. Challenge every doubtful or dangerous thought that comes rapping, as it were, for entrance at the door of your heart. Avoid dangerous occasions of sin ; resist the beginnings of temptations. Stifle evil suggestions before they have grown into strong and passionate desires. Pray earnestly. Assist at Mass. Frequent the Sacraments with great fervour. Lift up your hearts and thoughts to God a thousand

times during the day, and live as soldiers live in time of war, ever on the watch, and ready to repel the enemy. Then you will be in no danger of yielding to their shameful iniquitous suggestions. I will conclude with the words of St. Paul, already quoted : " Put on the armour of God that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. . . . "

#### RESOLUTION.

" Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one " (Eph. vi. 14-16).

## “THE WORLD”

“We know that the whole world is seated in wickedness.”—I St. John v. 19.

**W**HEN God first created the world, and sent it spinning through the measureless realms of space, and then placed man upon it, there to work out his salvation, both man himself and his habitation were declared by God to be good. And, had man retained his original innocence, not only would all creation have served him, and supplied his material wants, but it would have drawn his heart towards his Creator, and have been to him as a great book, in which he would have studied the wondrous perfections of Him who, by a single word, brought all things into existence. For, to the innocent and the pure of heart, “the heavens and the earth are ever telling the wondrous works of God” (Ps. xviii. 2). But, alas! man was no sooner created than he fell into sin, and, as a consequence, not only were his faculties dulled, but the very earth itself was cursed. “Cursed is the earth in thy work,” said the Almighty to Adam, after his sin; “thorns and thistles shall it bring forth; and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken” (Gen. iii. 17-19). Yes! the whole aspect of things was changed. The evil

that had entered man's soul overflowed and spread itself over the whole creation. It extended and extended, until it infected every part of the world, It contaminated everything, as poison will contaminate a whole stream.

And, now that sinners have multiplied upon it, it has become a mighty engine of evil, a hostile force, a danger and a snare, even for the prudent. "The world," said the apostle, "is the enemy of God." To be on the earth is to be in the midst of temptation ; to be stationed here is to be standing on a slippery and narrow ledge between heaven and hell. Our position is most unstable and insecure, and yet the issues are eternal and irretrievable when once the moment of our present life is over. So soon as we realise the words of the beloved apostle, viz., "The whole world is seated in wickedness" (1 St. John v. 19), that same world, my brethren, for which Christ refused even to pray (John xvii. 9), we must necessarily regard it with suspicion and misgiving. We must arouse ourselves to a keener consciousness of the fact that it is a gigantic power incessantly exercising its influence against us, and striving to withdraw us from our allegiance to God. Our attitude should be one of great prudence and ceaseless watching. In fact, we must behave ourselves as a soldier is wont to behave himself in a hostile country, and in the face of a cunning and unscrupulous enemy. We must be vigilant, distrustful, ready for action, resolute and bold. In what way, you may perhaps ask, is the world a source of danger? In many ways.

In the first place, then, by reason of its very character. There is no doubt but that man is affected by his surroundings. Thus, *e.g.*, a man who lives habitually among vulgar people will almost unconsciously get into vulgar ways. One, on the contrary, who moves habitually among the highest and most refined classes of society, will little by little assimilate to them, and acquire their refinement and polish. So again, if an Englishman wishes to acquire a perfect knowledge of some foreign tongue, such as French or German, is he not advised to spend some time in France or Germany, and to live among the natives? But why? Well, precisely because it is well known that every man is largely affected and influenced by his environment. The same principle holds good in the spiritual world. Were it possible for us to pass our days in the exclusive society of saints, we would find it far easier to be good. Their noble example, their elevating conversation, their high principles, and their blameless conduct would be most inspiring and encouraging and helpful. And while we would emulate their virtuous conduct, the fear of incurring their disapproval and indignation would keep us from the commission of many a fault. But the world we are living in is not composed of saints. On the contrary, the world is a hotbed of wickedness and of sin. Evil is all around us. It infects the very air we breathe; it lurks in the streets; it looks out upon us from the shop windows; it insinuates itself into our theatres and music-halls and other places of amusement. It is to be found in drinking-saloons and public-houses,

in low dancing-halls and certain places of ill-fame whose names I will not pollute my lips by mentioning.

The masses in our great towns and cities have no practical knowledge of God, nor do they care to have. Hundreds of thousands in this Christian country never go to any place of worship, never bow the knee in prayer, never utter the name of God, except to blaspheme it. "With millions of Englishmen," says the *Spectator*, "religion counts for nothing!" (p. 539). Sins, and great sins, are the order of the day. God is insulted on every side. Day by day the public papers chronicle hideous sins of all kinds. Day by day they publish accounts of crimes calling to heaven for vengeance, arising out of anger, hatred, vindictiveness, such as fighting, quarrelling, theft, murder, suicide, dishonesty, injustice, impurity, fornication, adultery, unnatural crime, and the rest. In all grades of society there are found the ravages of sin. Among rich and poor, among the highly educated and the ignorant, traces of it are distinctly visible, and may be detected without much seeking. The Law Courts are constantly dragging them into the light of day, and exposing them to the public view. I mean crimes which are against the Law of God, as well as against the laws of the land, such as perjury, drunkenness, robbery, divorce, fraud, violence, desertion, cruelty, adultery, and all manner of injustice. Yet for one crime that is detected, and dragged out into the light, and punished, there are probably hundreds that are never so much as heard of, and that will never be known until the great

Accounting Day, when all shall be revealed. Oh, what a world ! Yet this is the sort of dwelling-place we have to live in. This is the atmosphere, laden with moral defilement, that we have to breathe. As there is a much better chance of life for a delicate man with a weak chest, if he live in the pure air on some mountain peak in Switzerland, than if he live in the foul atmosphere of the lowest part of our great congested cities, so there would be a far better hope of salvation for us if we could live with the sinless angels of Paradise instead of with the fallen race of men upon earth. But that cannot be. And, at present, God does not wish that it should be. No ; so long as we are here our Divine Master wishes us to be exercised in virtue, to struggle amongst much opposition, to overcome evil with good, to fight bravely, and to suffer in the cause of justice and of truth. So He leaves the wicked, and allows them to mingle with the good for the greater trial and spiritual advantage of the elect. When the husbandman was asked to destroy the cockle that had grown in great abundance among the wheat, he declined, saying : “ Suffer them to grow together until the harvest, lest in destroying the cockle the wheat be also injured. When, however, the harvest comes, then my servants will gather the wheat into barns, but will cast the cockle into the fire to be burnt.” The cockle represent the wicked, and they shall endure till the end of time, so that the good may be given abundant opportunities of exercising themselves in charity, in patience, in faith, in long-suffering, and in all the other virtues.

We will now consider some of the different ways in which the world hinders us in the service of God. Firstly, by familiarising us with sin. However shocked we may be at first, we soon grow accustomed to the sight. By degrees we come to think less of it. After a while, the knowledge that God is being offended no longer saddens us. Nor does it fill us with fear and horror. On the contrary, we soon accept it as a matter of course. We regard it as natural, yea, as almost inevitable. We are even inclined almost to excuse it, and to attach but little importance to it, as though God could be outraged and insulted with impunity. That is the first step in the downward grade. The next step is still more disastrous. We instinctively proceed to contrast ourselves with those who are living around us. Whether consciously or not, we take complacency in the thought that, even if we are not saints, yet we are at all events not so bad as they are. We may perhaps miss Mass, or get drunk, upon occasion, but at all events we do not murder nor blaspheme, nor blow up our enemies by means of infernal machines. In fact, by the side of such horrors and crimes as are chronicled in the papers, and committed by others, our own misdeeds appear but as mere peccadilloes. And we make but little effort to improve.

Unfortunately for us, God does not judge us on any system of comparative guiltiness. Besides, the gravity of sin depends not only, nor even chiefly, on the specific act. It depends much more upon what graces we are resisting, what light we are

extinguishing, and upon the degree of knowledge that we possess, and the extent of the favours we have received, and the consequent ingratitude of which we are guilty when we outrage the majesty of God and break His commandments. Indeed, it is only in this manner that we can explain the declaration of St. Paul, when he writes: "Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief" (1 Tim. i. 15).

Of course, the apostle knew full well that thousands had committed and were committing far worse sins than he had ever been guilty of, but then he felt that they had never received the extraordinary graces and the supernatural privileges that had been his. In his charity, he looked upon sinners living around him as poor unhappy men, who had never had the opportunities that he enjoyed, and as being, for that reason, if not excusable, at least far less guilty than himself. "If," he reflected within himself, "they had received all the graces and blessings, the inspirations and spiritual admonitions, that I have had, they would probably have been more grateful, and have served God more faithfully than I have done." So, *in this sense*, he honestly persuaded himself that he was "the chief of sinners." But, alas! we have not the humility nor the charity of St. Paul. Hence, closing our eyes to the innumerable graces we have received, and the responsibility they carry with them, we fix our gaze on the sins of our less fortunate brethren. Then we pride ourselves on our comparative innocence. In a word, the world teaches us to make light of sin. And, little

by little, we forget that sin is a gigantic evil, which nothing can ever excuse. We cease to realise that it were better a thousand times to suffer torments and death, in its cruellest form, than to offend God, even but once ; and that nothing but sin can ever do us any serious or permanent harm, or place us at enmity with Him, who holds in His hands the reins of life and of death. This is the true view. This is the clear teaching of the infallible Church of God. True ! But such is not the view of the world. It is not the teaching of the multitudes who go to make up that world of which our Lord spoke when he said : " Love not the world," and to which the apostle referred when he said : " Be not conformed to this world." It is to the false opinion of the world that we are always in some danger of conforming, so long as we live in the midst of it. This constitutes a real peril. It would not matter so much, perhaps, if the world had to judge us at the last day. For then there would be some advantage in conforming to its principles, and accepting its ruling. But, so far from that being the case, the world itself and its false maxims will stand condemned. It will be denounced and cursed by the supreme Judge, as " the enemy of God." Hence the apostle St. James cries out : " Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God ? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God " (iv. 4). Could words be plainer than these ? Let us then not be seduced, but guard against its influence.

Another way in which the world deceives us, and

draws us into sin, is by persuading us that, after all, God cannot, or at least will not, punish so great a multitude. We take refuge in numbers, and persuade ourselves that God is like a human judge, who cannot deal with a whole community, or punish an entire people. We may not express this view openly, even to ourselves, but there is no doubt but that we feel less alarm and less remorse when we form but one of a wicked multitude, who are all equally guilty, than when we are acting independently and alone.

Besides these indirect incentives to sin on the part of the world, there are many others of a more direct character. Thus the world studies the weaknesses and sordid appetites of our fallen nature, and strives to pander to them. Opportunities are thrown in our way. Occasions of self-indulgence are carefully provided. If a man finds it already hard enough to keep sober, the world will not make it any easier. On the contrary, it will place a thousand chances of indulgence in his path. The drinking-shops, the tap-rooms, the whisky booths, the gin-palaces, all lit up and inviting, throw open their doors to him, and seem to repeat the invitation by which the crafty spider is said to have beguiled the foolish fly to its doom : " Will you walk into my parlour ? " with the appalling results that we are all acquainted with. Evil companions may add further inducements as well, and thus the world sets its snares for our feet. It is the same with every other evil passion that lurks within our breast. The world will deliberately encourage it, and offer

us the means of satisfying it. Take another example. What more soul-destroying passion is there than lust, impurity ? Yet the world fans the evil flame. It puts temptations in the way of even the innocent and the unsuspecting. It entices the young by promises of pleasures it cannot possibly provide, and adds fuel to the fire of lustful desires by suggestive books and novels, by indecent pictures and representations, plays and dances. It is the world, further, that misleads us by its false maxims, its heretical doctrines, its erroneous judgments, its readiness to excuse sin, and its practice of calling evil good, and good evil. It is difficult to read any ordinary paper or review without finding some more or less veiled attack upon the Church or its teaching. Sometimes by innuendo, sometimes by suggestion, sometimes by direct misrepresentation, and often by actual attack, it is sought to bring discredit upon the sacred doctrine of Jesus Christ, and upon the faith handed down to us by the saints. In this way the world exercises a most pernicious influence. When direct attacks will not answer, then it tries the effects of taunts and scornful words, and of ridicule and banter. How often Catholics in the mills, the factories and workshops, as well as in other places, have to put up with the jeers and the insulting remarks—yes, and even with the false charges and unfounded accusations of their anti-Catholic fellow toilers.

Some cock-and-bull story of an escaped nun, or dissolute friar, is introduced into the neighbourhood by a street preacher or park orator, and accepted,

of course, as Gospel truth. Then it is taken up and made use of as a convenient stone to fling against the Catholic Church, and the workers in our mines and stores and factories are tormented and upbraided because they are members of such an institution.

Then there is yet another way in which the world strives to encompass our spiritual ruin. In fact, this is perhaps the most insidious way of all. Why? Well, because it looks so innocent. And when a snare is cleverly hidden we scarcely suspect it. To explain what I mean, let me remind you that man's day is of limited duration. It consists of but four-and-twenty hours. Consequently, if we are to say our morning and evening prayers, to go to Mass on Sundays, to frequent the Sacraments, to examine our conscience, to make, at least occasionally, a little meditation, and to take a little spiritual reading, and so forth, it is essential that the whole of our day should not be filled by other occupations. Though the world may occupy a good deal of our limited day, it must not be allowed to occupy the whole of it. Now, it is just precisely that, that it is ever seeking to do. How often one hears it said: "I have no time." No time! "I say my prayers so badly, so hurriedly, so distractedly!" Why? "Oh, because I have no time to say them devoutly and thoughtfully and slowly." Or, worse than that, they will perhaps acknowledge that they cut their prayers short, or possibly omit them altogether. But why? For the reason already assigned, viz., because they have no time. No time to discharge the

foremost and most essential of all their duties, their duty towards Almighty God. They find plenty of time to enjoy the innumerable gifts of God. But they cannot find any time, however short, to thank Him for those gifts. They find time to nourish themselves with what God's providence has provided for their sustenance, but no time to lift up their hearts to Him in gratitude. Yes, they are quick to avail themselves of the benefits that God's bounty has showered upon them in such abundance. They use their eyes to read and to write and to gaze upon those whom they love, and for a thousand other purposes, and their ears to listen to the voices of friends or to the sounds of sweet harmony and music ; they enjoy the fresh air, and the cheery sunshine, and the innumerable sounds and sights of Nature. Yes ! my brethren, they find time to use every one of God's innumerable gifts, and to exercise their wonderful God-given senses and faculties, but no time to show gratitude to the Giver of all these good things.

Such gifts should awaken even the coldest hearted to a sense of his obligations. The very magnificence and the very number of God's favours should enkindle a glowing fire of love within our breasts. If we were not utterly spoiled and dulled by the atmosphere of the world, we would break forth, like the Prophet, and exclaim : " Oh, what shall I return to the Lord for His inestimable benefits ? " Yea, like holy David, we would call upon the whole creation to unite with us in praising God. " All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord ; praise and

exalt Him above all, for ever." "Ye sun and moon, ye stars and light, praise the name of the Lord," etc., etc. But, so far from this being the case, we allow the world to fill up the whole of our time, so that we really scarcely ever think of the greatest of Benefactors and the most indulgent of Fathers. Now the snare lies precisely in this, that what we are doing seems to be, and indeed is, in itself, so innocent. What is it that is occupying us? Well, it may be our business, our profession, our ordinary work of buying and selling, or it may be making clothes or boots or shoes, or spinning or weaving, or driving a 'bus, or a steam engine. You will argue within yourselves: "But this is no harm! I am committing no sin, I am breaking no command; I am free from blame."

Here is where the fallacy comes in. These occupations are innocent enough in themselves. Yes, they may be even most praiseworthy, in their proper place and time. But—and this is important—so soon as they begin to drive God out of our hearts, so soon as they are allowed to engross all of our attention, it is time to cry: Halt! So soon as ever our occupation, however good in itself, becomes a usurper, and demands that time which already belongs by right to God, why, then it is a real snare and danger. This is no imaginary danger. No! there are thousands who have perished by a process of gradual spiritual starvation. In order to meet the ever-increasing demands of the world, they have sacrificed first one religious duty and then another. And growing spiritually weak and faint, for want of

the graces that prayer and the Sacraments bring, they have fallen an easy prey to the enemy, and lost their souls. According to the words of holy David : “ My soul has withered away, because I have forgotten to eat my bread.”

Arouse yourselves, then, and learn the true nature of your environment. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

#### RESOLUTION.

Determine to recognise the fact that pitfalls and snares and hidden dangers are all around you, and that only the prayerful and the cautious can hope to escape. We are weak, and easily led into evil, for which we seem to have a natural aptitude. Our only hope must be in the strength of God, who has said : “ Fear not, for I have overcome the world.” “ Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made both heaven and earth.”

## THE FLESH

“ Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof.”—Rom. vi. 12.

**I**N order to reach the kingdom of heaven, there are three enemies that have first to be dealt with and overcome: the Devil, the World, and the Flesh. Of these, the Devil is the most formidable, for under that term are included the immense host of rebel angels whose power, if not restrained by God, would easily destroy the whole human race. If the Devil is the most powerful, the World is the most fierce, especially when she persecutes and imprisons and inflicts torture and death, as in the case of the martyrs and the confessors of the faith.

But, of all others, the Flesh is the most seductive and subtle and dangerous, and the cause of more widespread sin.

It is a true but startling fact that all theologians, confessors, and missionaries, in a word, all those who have the best claim to speak, declare it to be their conviction that more souls are eternally lost by reason of this sin than by any other. Many go a good deal further, and tell us that they are convinced that more men are lost through committing acts of impurity than by all other sins taken together. Listen, for instance, to the awful

warning of St. Alphonsus. And as I quote his words, bear in mind that he is no visionary, no inexperienced student speaking from the seclusion of his own room. No. St. Alphonsus has many claims upon our respectful attention and trust. In the first place, he was a great saint, and could therefore realise spiritual things, as only saints can. In the second place, he was a great missionary, and came in personal contact with immense numbers of men of all classes and conditions. He heard thousands of confessions, and spent many hours every week, throughout his exceptionally long life, in the tribunal of penance, receiving all who would come to him for absolution with the utmost suavity and patience. And many came from afar. Added to this, he was a famous theologian. He knew the gravity of different offences, and the degrees of guilt resulting from different circumstances. Yet, towards the end of his life, with all his experience behind him, he formulated his calm and deliberate judgment regarding sins of the Flesh.

Weigh well his solemn words : " My calm conviction is that more men and women are eternally lost through sins of the Flesh, not only than through any other sin taken singly, but than through all other sins put together " (Theol. Moralis). In another remarkable passage, in his Theology, he expresses himself with even greater vigour. Listen to these awe-inspiring words : " I do not hesitate to affirm that all those who are lost are condemned to hell on account of sins of impurity, or at all events, are not condemned without them." Many

others express themselves in almost similar terms. Though these words just quoted are not to be taken as Gospel, yet they come to us weighted with all the authority of saintly men possessing an enormous amount of experience, and who have nothing to gain by exaggeration. And though they are somewhat startling, yet, if we calmly consider the case, perhaps even we shall feel compelled to admit that their words may be only too true. Why? Well, for many reasons.

In the first place, it is a sin that is so easily committed, and in the second place, it is a sin that is almost always mortal.

To fall into this sin, no special opportunity is required, and in this respect it differs from many others. Thus: If a man wishes to get drunk, he must be somewhere where drink is procurable. If a man wishes to steal, there must be something of value within reach for him to lay his hands upon: in short, for other sins the occasion must be offered, but in the matter of impurity the opportunity is never wanting. Man carries about with him all the means of self-indulgence. He may be poor and without means, he may be absolutely alone, perhaps a prisoner in a solitary cell. He may not move a muscle, nor stretch out a finger; yea, more, he may not utter a word nor formulate a syllable, and yet that man may easily commit a most grievous offence, and slay his own soul. How? By allowing his thoughts to wander on to dangerous ground. By calling up images and forms which may stir up his evil passions, and which may lead him on

and on towards the abyss, till his free will is at last won over, and he takes deliberate and wilful complacency in the impure thought. What does our Divine Master say ? He says that it is not merely acts and words that are sinful, but even thoughts. Hark to these terrifying words : “ You have heard that it was said to them of old : ‘ Thou shalt not commit adultery,’ but I say to thee, that whosoever shall look upon a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart ” (Matt. v. 28).

Thus, a mere look, the mere passing of an evil desire, if it be wilful and fully indulged, contaminates and defiles the soul. The thought, the desire of a moment, fully consented to, strikes the soul a mortal wound. For, so deadly poisonous and fatal is this vice, that the least wound kills the soul. How easy, how fatally and how swiftly, may not death come to our doors !

In the second place, there is no sin to which men have a greater natural attraction. There seems to be something in our fallen nature which hungers after what is forbidden and unclean. There is no vice more insidious and ensnaring, or more difficult to overcome. The mere narration of sins against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments, the mere detailed accounts of actions or of conversations which are impure, constitute such violent temptations as to be absolutely forbidden. In short, there is something so defiling about impurity that we cannot read or listen to an impure story without danger to our innocence. How different

that is from other vices ! One may read the account of the most appalling murders, one may assist at plays where stabbing and shooting and general slaughter form the chief theme, and do so without any bloodthirsty feelings being aroused, and without experiencing the slightest inclination to commit murder oneself. So, too, one may read of riches, and of wealthy merchants, and of millionaires, and of rivers of gold, and oceans of silver, without being in any way tempted to acts of robbery or theft. And so on, with all the other subjects of human experience save one. There is one—just one extraordinary exception, and that is impurity. There is so great an affinity between man and that vice that one dare not even paint it, nor represent it, nor write detailed accounts of it, nor give narratives of those who have lived immoral lives. One cannot even explain the sin from the pulpit, nor deal with it at all, except in the most distant and general and indirect way. Why ? Because a mere breath from that horrible region is enough to contaminate and destroy. Because such accounts and such images suggest thoughts. And the mere thought can set the mind in a blaze. “ From a spark cometh a great fire.” The dwelling upon evil of this kind, the mere listening to an immoral tale or novel, the simple reading of its pages, exposes one to danger, and throws open the door to every species of evil suggestion. This is so true, and so fully recognised and admitted by prudent men and theologians, that they go so far as to discourage and even forbid any detailed examination

of conscience on such subjects. While they urge us to study every detail of other sins, and to examine our conduct and thoughts of pride and avarice, and anger, and the causes that led to them, and the rest, they positively forbid us to dwell on our temptations against purity, and to recall the occasions that gave rise to them, and so forth. For they tell us that by recalling the scene, and reviving the impression, we do but expose ourselves afresh to the danger of falling. So great is man's weakness in this matter, that the simple recollection of past falls is apt to drag him into the mire again.

Other temptations we may confront boldly, but not this one. As St. Alphonsus says: "In our warfare against other enemies we may be bold and fearless, but in our warfare against the flesh we must act as cowards, that is to say, we must run away." Indeed, this much is at least implied by the apostle St. Paul. For while St. Peter tells us to "Resist the Devil," St. Paul, speaking of this special vice, says, not resist, but fly—*i.e.*, "Fly fornication" (1 Cor. vi. 18).

It is hard enough for men and women, living in the midst of the dissolute society of our big cities, with all their seductions and pitfalls, to keep themselves pure and unspotted from the world. But the world makes it ten thousand times more difficult by the attitude it takes up regarding this deadly, soul-destroying offence. The world, in fact, puts itself in league with man's own evil passions. It flatters him that acts, and still more

words and thoughts, of uncleanness do no great harm. It makes light of them. It passes them over as acts of mere human frailty, to be readily condoned.

If a young man breaks the Sixth or the Ninth Commandment, and grievously offends God, and renders himself guilty of eternal death, the world will stand complacently by, and smile good-naturedly, and say, with a shrug of the shoulders, "Well, after all, young men must sow their wild oats." Or else it will laugh with a sardonic leer, and observe: "You know, boys will be boys," or "You cannot put old heads on young shoulders." In short, the world dismisses cases of the most appalling crimes of this nature as though they were of no account whatever. And, of course, men are only too ready to accept a view so entirely in accordance with their corrupt inclinations and unruly passions.

But the world often goes even further than that. It will seek to persuade its votaries, not only that it is difficult to resist sins of the flesh, but it will declare it to be even wholly impossible. This atrocious lie is repeated again and again, to the no small injury of those who are silly enough to accept it as true. One may frequently hear people talking in that strain. They will affirm, quite oracularly, that it is absolutely impossible to lead a pure life. To cite a single instance. Quite recently a writer in *The English Review* (July 1913) says: "You may take it for granted that all unmarried men you meet are immoral: *they cannot help it*: Nature will have it so." They declare without any

hesitation that, though many make professions, they are merely professions, and they, of course, know better, and are satisfied that no one ever has or ever will really live up to that high level. This is a clear proof of their own unfortunate spiritual condition, but certainly that is all that can be said.

Now, let us ask, what is the plain and unvarnished fact? For, when men speak so cock-suredly, and so dogmatically, there is generally some slight foundation for their opinion. The truth, as taught by the Church, is this :

God has given us certain helps. He has instituted the Sacraments. He has bestowed upon us the power of prayer, and by such means we are perfectly well able to overcome every seduction. So long as we remain faithful to Mass and the Sacraments, and have the presence of mind to call upon our Lord in the day of trouble, nothing can harm a hair of our heads. He can preserve us in the midst of the most violent assault of the unclean spirit, as easily as He preserved the three children in the fiery furnace. And hundreds of thousands have experienced and are experiencing the sufficiency of His grace, in every part of the world, consequently there is no excuse for those who fall. They have all the requisite means of perseverance given them.

But it is equally true that we are not able to overcome this monster when left to ourselves. To trust to our own strength and resolution alone is to expose ourselves to certain defeat. The experience of Solomon is the experience of every member of the human family. " I knew that I *could not* otherwise

be continent, except God gave it, and this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was ; so I went to the Lord, and besought Him, and said with my whole heart"—here follows a long and beautiful prayer, which you can read for yourselves at your leisure, forming the ninth chapter of the Book of Wisdom.

From this inspired passage it is easily seen, in the first place, that continence is a gift of God, and in the second place, that it is not to be had except for the asking. Solomon says he could not be chaste "unless God gave him the gift," and he also tells us how he "besought it of the Lord." Had he continued to have recourse to prayer he never would have afterwards fallen away, as he did. But, having given up prayer, neither his antecedent merits, nor his exceptional wisdom, nor his exalted position, nor anything else, could save him from the allurements of designing women and the attractions of pleasure. His sad fate is a terrible warning to us all. Let us, then, obey the command of our Lord, and "watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation," for though "the spirit may be willing, the flesh is weak."

Another special danger connected with this sin is that it may easily lead to others: to bad confessions, for instance, and then to sacrilegious Communions, which thrust the unhappy sinner deeper and deeper into the mire. The devil will first do his utmost to draw us into the commission of some impure act. He will display all its attractiveness before our eyes, and try to convince us

that it hides a thousand delights and satisfactions, as he tried to convince our first parents that the apple in the Garden of Eden contained undreamed of gifts ; and he will hide from us, as far as possible, the shamefulness and the vileness and the ignominy of it. Yes, he will hide all that from us, as a trapper will hide the snare, or the fisherman the hook. But, once he has caught us in his foul meshes, then he changes his tactics. Then he will proceed to inspire us with such horror and shame and confusion that we all at once begin to feel that we can never bring ourselves to expose our ghastly wounds to the priest in the sacred tribunal. Though we were easily persuaded to eat of this forbidden fruit, we find it no easy matter to humbly own up to it afterwards. We are oppressed with confusion at the mere prospect of confiding such deeds of shame to the confessor ; we ask ourselves with consternation : “ What, oh, whatever will he think of me, if I mention such things ? ” The devil will do all in his power to increase our alarm still further and to fan our fears. And we may very likely be persuaded to conceal our fault, and to abandon the one great means of reconciliation. Alas ! such motives have kept persons from the Sacraments for years and years, and sometimes have caused them to give up the practice of Confession altogether. Human respect proved too much for them. Shame closed their mouths, and they became possessed by a “ dumb devil,” which was never exorcised.

Bad Confessions and sacrilegious Communions, then, are some of the looked-for consequences of

impure indulgences. But there are also other evils following in the train of this sin. In the first place, an impure man or woman seldom keeps his abominations to himself. He will spread his corruptions to others, and drag them down to his own level. He thus becomes the cause of sins in others, and does the devil's work, and even where he has not taught vice to the innocent, he at least encourages it in the already corrupt, by his example, even if not by his words and counsel. And, in so far as one is wilfully guilty of another's sin, one may be as truly damned for it as for one's own. In fact, to lead a fellow creature into grievous sin is to be guilty of murder, and murder of the very worst kind, since it is the slaying, not of his body, but of his immortal soul. Let those, then, take heed how they infect others by their own bad conduct.

Further, bear in mind that the sin of impurity is what is called a capital sin. And it is so called, says St. Gregory, because from this vice, as from a great spring, issue forth a number of others.

One who is bent on this form of self-indulgence will employ any means, however unlawful, and often will violate justice in the attempt. Then he will often have recourse to lies, and even to perjury, in order to conceal his guilt. So, again, from such abominations will often arise violent quarrels, and murders, and hatred and vengeance, on the part of those who have been wronged, or on the part of their relations and families. The papers swarm with instances. These are but a few of the many consequences that are apt to spring from fornication,

adultery, and other sins of the kind. Thus, from one sin, a hundred other sins are born !

We will conclude by glancing at some of the dreadful effects that these sins leave upon our souls.

The first to which I shall call your attention is spiritual blindness, or what theologians call *cæcitas mentis*. That is, a certain dullness and darkness of the mind, in its relation to spiritual things ; a clouding over of the intellect, so that it no longer appreciates nor cares for the things of God as it did. It loses all fear of future punishments, and the keen consciousness of sin, and becomes indifferent, hardened, and worldly minded. As the " clean of heart " are called " blessed, because they shall see God," even in this world, by faith, so those that are not " clean of heart " shall not see Him, nor recognise His law and His sovereignty, but shall grope in the dark, and be in danger of losing their way altogether.

The second evil fruit is self-love. Nothing makes one so selfish as luxury, or sins of the flesh. It absorbs one's thoughts, it makes oneself one's own centre, till one comes to regard one's personal and animal pleasures as the very end of existence. To obtain one's end, one will tread on the rights of others, and trample on the weak and unprotected, without hesitation or remorse, and sacrifice literally everything for the sake of one's lust. Oh, how many deeds of darkness have been committed in the pursuit of forbidden pleasure ! A third effect of these sins is hatred of God, and a love of this world, and a great dread of the world to come.

Self-indulgence cloy the soul. It winds it round and round, as it were, in an atmosphere of its own creating, an atmosphere of sensuous delights and bodily pleasures, which causes it to cleave to the world, and impels it to seek all its happiness in the things of time. It becomes carnal-minded, and earthly, and of the earth, and has no longing or desire for heaven. Even God, whom it regards only as One who will interfere with its vile and base conduct, it hates, and fears, and would gladly forget.

But, dear brethren, I will not detain you with the detailed account of all the innumerable and horrible results following in the train of a life of immorality.

Let us content ourselves with the reflection that there is no sin so dangerous, so widespread, and so hateful in the sight of God—no sin, at all events, which He has so severely punished and condemned.

The worst pains and penalties with which He has ever visited the world have been occasioned by it. Nothing has ever happened that can compare with the Universal Deluge. There we behold the entire earth, with the whole of its inhabitants, covered by a mass of seething waters. Man and his dwelling, beasts and cattle and all living things, lie engulfed in the deep tide, that rose and rose until it covered the tops of the highest mountains. Of all man's handiwork, of all his sumptuous buildings, his cities and gardens and parks and beautiful plantations, nothing now remains. Where once he danced and sang and made high revel, nothing is

heard but the rush of pitiless waters, and the sougling of the winds. The luxurious palaces, the spacious banqueting halls, the furniture and fittings of fabulous price, are now hidden away, fathoms deep beneath the awful flood. Where are the joyous notes of the children, where are the fashionable ladies, and their servants and attendants ? Where are the kings and princes and their great retinues, their vast armies, their guards and retainers and serving men, their pages and their minstrels and singers ? Where ? One and all are drowned in the awful deluge. Why, oh ! why is this ? It is because "all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth." Their sins called to heaven for vengeance. They were grave sins, they were continuous sins, and—note, my brethren—they were sins of the flesh. God would bear with it no more, so He opened the floodgates of heaven, and with one great swoop He swept them all away. What says the Scripture ? "All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth" (Gen. vi. 12). In fact, the state of society was so bad that the inspired writer actually says that "God seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and that all the thoughts of their hearts were bent upon evil at all times, He repented Him that He had made man" (Gen. vi. 5). So He said : "I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth," and every other living being that is to be found thereon.

Oh, what a revolting and abominable sin this must be in the sight of the infinitely pure and all-holy God ! When shall we begin to understand its malice and its shamefulness ?

## RESOLUTION.

Let us fly from it, as from the face of a serpent, and ward off all danger by keeping ever under God's protecting care, by the exercise of prayer and mortification, and the careful avoidance of every dangerous occasion.

## THE UNPARALLELED GRAVITY OF SIN

“ The wages of sin is death.”—Rom. vi. 23.

**T**HE age we are living in is undoubtedly an age of great material progress and luxury ; an age of extraordinary discoveries and marvellous inventions, all of which contribute something to man's earthly happiness and comfort. The sun of science never shone so brightly as it shines to-day. It has thrown its revealing rays into the obscurest recesses, and has disclosed to us new ways and new means of progression, not merely over land and sea, but even under the waters in our submarines, and through the air in our aeroplanes, and has rendered us almost independent of time and space.

But, though it has done much to promote man's physical comfort and temporal well-being, it has left his moral nature practically untouched. Spiritually the world is still in darkness and ignorance, and men are probably even more dissipated and earthly-minded than they were a century ago. Outside the borders of the Catholic Church, Protestantism is relaxing its hold on the few fundamental truths which once held it together. It is rapidly losing its influence and power with the masses, and parsons and

preachers of all denominations call, but call in vain, upon their flocks to come and fill their half-empty churches.

Even Catholics, who live in the world, and breathe its pernicious atmosphere, cannot hope entirely to escape the subtle influence of their environment, and are found, perhaps almost unconsciously, adopting the opinions and views of those among whom they have to live and move. Yes, even Catholics—often by imperceptible degrees—come to lose the clear, definite perception of spiritual things, and grow more and more tolerant of error, and less and less tenacious of truth.

One of the gravest symptoms noticeable at the present day is the general dulling and hardening of the conscience. Men are losing their sense of the unparalleled enormity of sin. By long familiarity with sin, they have come to regard it, firstly, as unavoidable, and then, at last, to condone it, as almost excusable. So that, for a small present gain they will not hesitate to offend God grievously, and will sell heaven for earth, and barter away eternity for time, on the most trivial pretext, and with scarcely any symptoms of sorrow or regret. To use the expression of Holy Writ : “ They drink iniquity like water ” (Job xv. 16). Consequently, it becomes a special duty for us, members of the true Church, to keep before us the clear and infallible teaching of the Church, and to insist, again and again, that sin is not merely an evil and the greatest of evils, but an infinite evil, and the only one of which we need stand in any fear, or that can do us any permanent injury.

The inspired Word of God not only teaches this most explicitly, but it seeks to impress the fact upon us by the most appalling and startling examples.

Instance after instance of sin's withering and devastating and blighting effects is flashed upon us from its sacred pages. Like the changing scenes in some awful tragedy they succeed one another with amazing impressiveness.

Thus, the opening pages of Holy Writ describe how God, in the exercise of His supreme power, created a vast host of blessed spirits, bright and beautiful and glorious, and reflecting from their angelic natures something of the untold splendour and magnificence of God Himself. As we contemplate the scene, we are ravished by the picture of so much joy, glory, happiness and beauty ; but almost before we can realise the full extent of its grandeur, we are startled to behold a third part of their number swept away by the angry breath of God, and hurled headlong into the abyss, shorn of all their light and glory, stripped of every gift and quality that makes life worth living, and condemned to eternal torment in the lake of quenchless fire. And when we demand in wonder and consternation the cause, the answer is flung back to us : Sin.

Then, turning over the sacred volume, in the very next chapter we are shown the garden of Eden, where we contemplate a new race forming. Adam is the child of God, the last work of His divine hands. God loves him, with a love exceeding all expression and all thought, and pours out His favours and graces upon him with the greatest profusion, apportioning

him to a throne left vacant by the rebel angels. Never did any earthly father love his only son as God loved the father of our race, created free from all sin, and made to His image and likeness. Yet, all at once, we again note a change in God's attitude. His intense love is transformed into a holy indignation. This child that He has created and adopted and made "a little lower than the angels," this child that He has honoured and favoured, and watched over and loved, and pressed lovingly to His bosom, has suddenly become intolerable to Him. He relaxes His embrace, and (if we may so express ourselves) unwinding His arms from about his neck, He flings him from Him, and thrusts him out of His sacred presence, like something vile.

Again we ask: "Why has God thus changed?" The answer comes back: "It is not God who has changed. God never changes! It is the child of His love that has changed. Sin has entered, and has rifled the casket of its priceless jewel of innocence, that jewel which alone gave it any value, and has left it broken, worthless, and polluted. It is but the empty and defiled casket that God has flung away. Sin has usurped God's place. Sin is there in possession, and sin can no more unite with God, nor God with sin, than darkness can embrace the sun."

Then the curtain falls, and another scene is placed before our eyes. The inspired writer transports us in spirit to a ragged height outside the walls of Jerusalem, with a ghastly Cross, breaking the skyline, erected on its summit. Though it is still early

in the afternoon—scarcely three o'clock—yet the hill is wrapped in darkness, for the sun withholds its light. The earth staggers like a drunken man ; the rocks split with a deafening report ; the graves open, and the dead appear, while the lightnings cut the darkness like the flashes of a seraph's sword, while the thunder fills the distant hills with menacing murmurs and distressful rumblings ; for all nature is in convulsions. And out of the darkness and the confusion resound the words : “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Consider whence these words proceed. Behold the Cross, and the torn and bruised and mangled human form upon it. There it lies stretched, cold and naked and deserted, and in the throes of death, with distended limbs, and bleeding members, and thorn-crowned head. But who is this being condemned to so atrocious and agonising a death ? Surely this is too much ! Surely no criminal, no murderer, no rebel, however base and degraded, can ever have merited such a fate ? Ah ! it is not the voice of a criminal, but a cry issuing from the lips of the infinite God who made us. It is the great Lover of our souls. It is the Divine Shepherd, actually laying down His life for His sheep.

It is our wont, and justly, to picture God dwelling in light inaccessible, and seated on a throne of glory in Heaven, surrounded by myriads of administering angels, and with a countenance so dazzling in its splendour that the very cherubim veil their faces as they prostrate before Him in lowly adoration.

Yet here we behold God Himself really and truly

fastened by nails to the Cross, and soaking the hard wood with His life's blood. What has brought about this mysterious and awful transformation? There is but one thing that has done it. There is but one thing that has the power to do it, and that is sin. Sin has (as St. Paul tells us) crucified the Lord of Glory, making Him a mockery. It is God who is thus crucified, that is to say, it is a Divine Person, for in Christ there is no human person. But why is God Himself reduced to such a position? Because so incomprehensible an evil is sin, that no man nor angel nor any finite being whatsoever can offer an adequate atonement for such an offence. If sin is to be fully satisfied for, if the whole price, the infinite price, is to be paid, then God and no other can discharge the debt. A Divine Person, clothed in our nature, pays our ransom and rescues us from hell.

But how comes God to be in human form? How is it that He appears clothed in the vesture of sin, He who hates sin with an infinite hatred? Did He, who came "to take away the sins of the world," come of a polluted stock? Did He take flesh from a tainted source? Did He draw His blood—that sacred blood which was to purge out sin—from one already contaminated by sin? from one blasted by the foul breath of the fiend? Impossible! Perish the thought. No. While we believe and know that God was made man, and that He was as truly the child of an earthly parent as we are children of earthly parents, at the same time we recognise a fundamental difference between Him and

all other sons. And that difference lies in the fact that He was able both to choose His Mother, and to fit and prepare her for her sublime and exalted station. And here, in God's attitude and bearing towards His Mother, we find one of the most convincing and one of the most incontestable proofs of the malignity and the degradation of sin.

Weigh the whole subject carefully. On the one hand, we contemplate God deliberately selecting a mother. Think of it, my brethren. Think of a Being of infinite power, and infinite in resources, before whom all ways lie open; who possesses complete control over all creation; whose riches are boundless, and who can call into being infinite treasures exceeding all thought and imagination. Wealth and honour and influence and beauty and wisdom and power, in all their undreamed-of possibilities and manifestations, lie at His beck and call, and are His to distribute and to apportion as He wills. But of His limitless and boundless treasury He selects the very best gift with which to enrich and adorn the soul of His blessed Mother. He bestows upon her that which He prizes most, that which He esteems beyond all else, that without which all else is valueless.

And what, my brethren, according to the infallible judgment of infinite wisdom, is the highest and the most priceless gift ?

It cannot be material wealth. No ! for He left her poorest of the poor, without shelter or a home in which to bring forth her child. Not honours and dignities, for she was hidden and unknown, and

despised by the world. Not worldly delights and comforts and treasures, for "great as the sea was her sorrow," and a sword of deepest anguish pierced her heart.

Nor was it fame and influence and a great name. No. The fact is, God, whose hands were free to bestow upon her what He valued most, wished us to see and to understand what sort of value He attaches to riches and honours, to crowns and coronets, to station and position and pleasures and worldly delights, for the sake of which men run riot and lose their souls. He wished us to see that all these are as nothing compared to holiness and freedom from sin. Consequently, the one human being whom He loved above all, and about whose state and reputation He was most concerned, He deliberately left in pain, and want, and sorrow and humiliation. Why? Because these things did not matter. Only one thing mattered; only one thing was of supreme importance, and that was innocence, purity, freedom from all stain. The one gem of dazzling beauty, the one pearl of fabulous price, which would lift her above all and distinguish her from all her race, was complete immunity from all moral guilt, and the plenitude of divine grace. Oh, this choice made by One who cannot err in His judgment, or be mistaken in His estimate, teaches us that a sinless soul is better than name and fame and station, better than kingdoms and empires, yea, incomparably better than anything the world has to offer. For that pearl was God's royal gift to His blessed Mother. God left her poor and despised in the eyes

of men, and the world passed her by unheeded. She was poorly clad and poorly fed and poorly lodged, and weary with toil, and the world knew her not, but in God's sight her beauty eclipsed the very stars, and her glory put to shame the sun, and filled heaven itself with a splendour and a glory all her own.

The lily, as it first unfolds its petals to the light, is not so pure as she. The virginal snow that crowns the highest mountain peak of Chimborazo, unsoiled by human footstep, is not so dazzlingly white.

There have been, and no doubt (if the world lasts) there will still be, great saints, and virgins, and confessors, and martyrs, but none so great, none so immaculate as she. The angels and archangels are her messengers and servants and wait upon her will ; and the very highest amongst them acknowledge her superiority and proclaim her Queen of Heaven as well as of earth. She and she alone has been found worthy of becoming the Mother of the Incarnate God ! And her fitness and qualification is found to consist precisely—not in anything the world prizes, or would even stoop to look at—but rather in what worldlings throw aside for the merest whim, and are ready to forfeit for sake of the baubles of earth, viz., perfect purity and spotless innocence. The whole of God's relations with His blessed Mother point to and enforce a most practical lesson, that we should do well to lay to heart. They prove that if we wish to render ourselves pleasing to God, we must wage a fierce and unrelenting war with sin. The more carefully we watch over ourselves and the

more resolutely we guard against even venial faults and imperfections—in short, the more closely we resemble the Immaculate Mother of God, the more we shall grow in God's favour.

Crowns and diadems, wealth and wide possessions, name and fame, count but as straws when cast into the balance of the Sanctuary. The beggar, the outcast, the crossing-sweeper or meanest under-scullion, if only his soul be freer from sin, and more heavily charged with grace, will be more esteemed by God, and will wear for all eternity a brighter and a nobler crown. The saints are often—nay, almost always—hidden. A saint, a hero, a very seraph of virtue may lie hidden away, beneath a very rugged and uncouth exterior, like your precious pearl in your vile oyster. Indeed, he may continue all his life long unrecognised by man, who sees but the exterior. But such a soul is an object of extreme beauty in the sight of God, who looks into the secret recesses of the heart, and who will bend down and woo it, and give it a place of honour for ever in His heavenly kingdom.

#### RESOLUTION.

Guard against the erroneous judgments and false maxims of the world, and resolve to estimate the gravity and malice of sin according to the mind of Him who will one day judge the living and the dead.

## LIFE A WARFARE

“Man’s life upon earth is a warfare.”—Job vii. 1.

**W**E can never repeat the consoling truth too often, that God is not only good, but the infinite goodness, and the origin and source of all goodness, whether among men or among angels. He is in an especial way our Father, and he loves us with an indescribable tenderness, and far more sincerely and vehemently than any earthly parent can love his child. In fact, the love of the most devoted and passionate of parents for an only child is no more when compared with the love of God than is the warmth of a ray of sunshine when compared to the fierce fire of the blazing sun from which it comes.

Now, to love us means to wish us well. It means to desire our welfare. And this God does, and does most sincerely. His love manifests itself in a thousand ways. The Cross speaks to us of His love whenever we look at it; so does the tabernacle wherein he dwells day and night; so does the baptistry with its cleansing waters; so does the confessional with its wonderful association of mercy and forgiveness and reconciliation. And so does everything else in a greater or lesser measure. It is true we do not always understand God’s ways, because we are so obtuse and so blind and so

suspicious. And because we misunderstand, we not unfrequently misjudge, and imagine—but oh ! how falsely—that God is harsh or cruel or unloving.

No ! God is always God : which is the same thing as saying that God is always the uncreated goodness and the infinitely loving. His love is not less when He sends trials and tribulations than when He sends prosperity and peace ; though in times of suffering we are ever ready to doubt. God knows how useful and advantageous temptation is : and it is for us to trust Him, as a sick child trusts its father's love, even when he administers some nauseous drug. How little we understand what God is doing when He visits us with trials and afflictions !

I have sometimes stood in the workshop of a clever sculptor, and watched him at his craft. A rough and shapeless piece of marble stands in the centre of the room. The artist looks upon it with interest and delight. He realises its capacities and how it may be shaped and formed into a thing of beauty. Then with hammer and scalpel he sets himself to the task. Listen to the metallic ring of the hammer. See how the chips fly. See how the sculptor's eyes glance and glisten with pleasurable anticipations.

The marble is, of course, a dull and inanimate thing ; but what would be its feelings and its sentiments could it feel ? Would it not murmur and complain ? Would it not cry out against the artist ? Would it not beg of him to desist ? Would it not ask : Why do you strike ? why do you deal me blow

after blow ? And the artist would reply : I am doing you no harm, but, on the contrary, I am rendering you a signal service. I am converting you into a thing of exceeding beauty. Every blow, every stroke is adding something to your worth. In your crude state no one would trouble to look upon you. But trust me : give me a free hand. Let me work my will upon you and I will transform you into a beauteous statue, that will arrest all eyes. You will be gazed on by admiring thousands, and the highest in the land will vie with one another to secure possession of so exquisite an object.

This is but a parable. But you can see its application. We are in the hands of God as a piece of marble is in the hands of some renowned sculptor. God would mould us and fashion us into the image of His Divine Son. He would confer upon us, in this way, a dignity and a pre-eminence which words cannot express and which imagination cannot picture. But this necessitates many a hard blow, and many a severe shock. Yes ; if we are to advance and to practise virtue, and to be made worthy of a place in the kingdom of God, we must allow the hand of the divine Artist to lie, sometimes, heavily upon us. We must submit to temptation. Temptation beautifies and enriches the soul in two ways. In the first place it helps to strengthen and to develop such virtues as we already possess ; and in the second place it calls into existence other virtues, which, but for temptation, would never have any existence at all.

Consider, for instance, the virtue of faith. I may

possess this virtue, but if my faith has never been exercised, I shall not possess the virtue in a very high degree. Take a man conspicuous for his faith, a man who has been pointed out as specially deserving of admiration in this respect, and then consider the circumstances of his life. We will take Abraham. His faith is spoken of wherever the Christian religion is practised. It is commended by St. Paul as eminently worthy of note, and also by St. James in his Catholic epistle. But why was *his* faith so remarkable? Simply because it stood firm and unshaken amid a veritable sea of temptation. In the first place he lived in a perverse and adulterous generation: his lot was cast amid a scoffing and unbelieving race. Secondly, because of the manner in which God Himself was pleased to try him. Let me recall an instance or two. God promised him a son. But when? Well, when all natural hope of begetting a child was already passed. Both Abraham and his wife Sara were far advanced in years. They had reached an age when, humanly speaking, it is no longer possible to bring children into the world. The promise of a son was therefore a severe test of faith—so severe indeed, that it proved too much for his consort. When she heard the promise that she, in her advanced age, was to become a mother, she laughed incredulously “behind the door of the tent, exclaiming: Shall I who am an old woman bear a child indeed?” (Gen. xviii. 13). No! not I!

She represents the incredulous world. Abraham, however, believed. He knew that God, who estab-

lished the laws of generation, can re-fashion, suspend, or alter them as He pleases. He realised as a true and loyal servant of God that there is only one thing that God cannot do, only one thing impossible to Him, and that is to break His word, to prove unfaithful to His promise. If God said he should have a son, then a son he would most certainly have. Abraham stood this test. But there was another and a severer preparing.

The son was born, and then consider what happened.

God first of all promised that he would make of Abraham a great nation (xii. 2) and that in him all the kindred of the earth should be blessed (xii. 3). That in a word he was to have grandchildren and great-grandchildren and to be the father of a mighty people. Well, having *promised* this, then He forthwith proceeds to command him to sacrifice his only child, his only begotten son Isaac. Here, indeed, was an exercise of faith. Abraham was over a hundred years old. Isaac was the only hope of his ever having grandchildren—and now he is told to slay Isaac. The promise and the command seemed wholly incompatible. His only human hope lay in his son. To slay his son was surely to extinguish for ever all possibility of his becoming the father of a mighty people, or indeed of any people at all.

This might indeed have puzzled and distressed the stoutest heart. But Abraham was a holy man, a man of faith, so it did not occur to him to reason about the commands of God. It was his duty, not to enter into a discussion with infinite Wisdom, but to

obey. So he left the issues to God and simply and readily proceeded to carry out the command. But what a trial, not merely of his father's love for his only son, but of his faith. In these and in similar ways Abraham's faith was so exercised and strengthened that it soon reached an heroic degree, and rendered him so dear to God that he was able to obtain almost whatever he prayed for.

It would be interesting to develop this thought further, but time is limited ; and having shown you how temptations may increase and intensify existing virtues, I wish to show you now how temptation not merely exercises and ripens such virtues as we already possess, but how it gives birth to others, which (in the absence of all trial) would find no place in the Christian economy.

Which shall we select by way of illustration ? We can hardly choose a more beautiful virtue than patience. It is most highly spoken of in Scripture. "Patience," says St. Paul, "is necessary for you, that doing the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Heb. x. 36). St. Luke expresses himself yet more strongly. He assures us that by the exercise of this virtue we shall secure possession of our souls and obtain salvation. "In your patience you shall possess your souls." St. James writes : "Patience hath a perfect work, that you may be perfect, and entire, and failing in nothing" (I. 4). And so I might go on quoting passage after passage in praise of this virtue.

Patience ! patience ! What should we know of patience in the absence of trial and temptation ?

Patience ! The very notion of patience is necessarily connected with pain and suffering and hardship. The very derivation of the word supplies us with an argument. Patience is derived from the Latin *partior*, I suffer. And the virtue is actually born of trial and affliction, and is exercised more and more in the measure in which we suffer.

If we had nothing to contend against, nothing to put up with ; if we were never crossed nor contradicted, nor insulted ; if we were never harassed by the devil and his angels, never tormented by stings of the flesh, never attacked and opposed by the world, what would be the result ? Just as a limb or an organ that is never used becomes atrophied, so would it be with this virtue.

Is patience exercised by one who is rich and prosperous and smiled on by the world, and who has all his own way, and can indulge every whim and fancy ? Do we speak of the patience of the strong and robust, who lie at ease on the lap of luxury and are never denied anything ?

No ! The example set before us in the inspired text is of a very different kind. A type well worthy of the careful consideration of all men, in all ages, is that of holy Job. Why is his patience so extolled ? Why is it held up before our eyes ? Because he was not only patient, but patient under such awful provocation. Yes, calm and patient when everything was conspiring together to make him impatient.

From a rich and happy man he became poor and miserable. His possessions were destroyed, his barns were burned, his flocks were scattered, his

children slain : and, as though that were not enough, he was stricken by a loathsome disease, and covered from head to feet with ulcers and sores and pustules, until at last we behold him squatting naked on a dung-hill, the picture of misery and discomfort, scraping his sores with a broken tile. Oh, what a pitiable state ! But listen. Can you catch an impatient murmur from his lips ? Can you detect any signs of anger, indignation, reproach, complaint ? Can you provoke him to utter one rebellious word against God's providence ?

No ! He blesses God amid all his suffering ; he justifies God against his false friends who would urge him rather to "curse God and die." With a patience which speaks of heroism and magnanimity, perhaps without a parallel, he cries : "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord."

And as trial and temptation and suffering and disgrace purified and chastened the soul of Job, and beautified and embellished it, so will it do with us, if only we will make a proper use of our opportunities. But here I must sound a note of warning.

We have, of course, no business to expose ourselves to temptation without necessity. That would argue a proud and presumptuous spirit. "Who loves the danger," says the Holy Spirit, "shall perish in it." To expose ourselves to a fall is to love the danger ; and prudence obliges us to shun the occasions. But when temptations assail us without any fault of our own, then we may trust absolutely on God's assistance. Be quite certain of two things ; firstly,

that God wishes and intends that we should extract good from it ; and secondly, that it will be our fault and no one else's if we do not.

There is one text in Holy Scripture in this connection to which I wish especially to draw your attention. The Holy Ghost says : " The just man is tried, like gold in the fire." The just man ! How is that ? Is it only the just who are exposed to temptation ? Is it they alone who are tried ? No. All men are tried. True. But not " as gold." It is the just only who are tried as gold is tried in the fire. If you throw wood or rubbish or lead, or any base metal into the fire, it will be consumed and burnt up. But this is not the case with pure gold. Gold suffers no deterioration, no injury ; on the contrary, it is purified and freed from all dross and rendered more precious and resplendent than before. So the just man, *i.e.*, the man who resists temptation, not only escapes all injury, but grows holier and more and more saintly by the process.

## THE SOUL ON THE BATTLE-FIELD

“Resist, strong in faith.”—I St. Peter v. 9.

THE first and most important condition of success in all our encounters with our spiritual enemies is, no doubt, to keep our faith vivid and strong. This is St. Peter's own advice. For, speaking of temptation, he says: “Resist, strong in faith.” The reason of this becomes very clear so soon as we recognise the fact that we are generally led astray by a process of gradual deception. That is to say, we sin, generally, without at all realising what we are really doing. The object which allures us looks exceedingly tempting and delightful, and we allow ourselves to grow so absorbed by it that we scarcely think of the consequences, or the value of what we may have to forfeit in the supernatural order by our indulgence. The result is we fall easy victims. But watch a man of strong, active faith, and you cannot fail to observe that he will take up a very different attitude, for the simple reason that he at least is fully awake and thoroughly realises what he is about. He is, let us suppose, tempted to defile his soul by the commission of some act of sensuality. No doubt the attraction may be very considerable.

He is as sensible of it as anybody else. But he stirs up the faith that is in him, and reflects within himself: " Yes, that indulgence does certainly appeal to my lower nature. It may afford me some slight physical delight. But, good God ! at what a cost ! Which is to be preferred—one moment of sensual delight, to be followed by an eternity of torment, or one moment of self-restraint, to be followed by an eternity of heavenly bliss ? His faith tells him that the pleasure of sin is but momentary, and the punishment of it eternal ; whereas the pain resulting from obedience is but of an instant, and the reward is everlasting. Then his faith will set before him another consideration. His mind will turn towards his God and his Creator, and he will recall the benefits he has received from Him. " He created me, He gave me life, He has preserved me to the present hour. He has bestowed upon me health, strength, possessions, friends, and acquaintances. Yes ; the very sun that shines upon me, the very air I breathe, the earth on which I tread come to me from Him. My five wonderful senses, my faculties of mind as well as of body, are all, without exception, His gifts to me. And now, am I going to forget all this, and show my gratitude by breaking His commandments and rebelling against Him ? And all for the sake of what ? O Shame ! O Disgrace ! for the sake of a momentary bestial satisfaction ? Is that the return I am going to offer to Him for such countless benefits ? What have I done so far to prove my gratitude ? What have I offered to God in return for His

generosity? Nothing! The fact is, I have nothing to offer but what I have first received from Him. True. But now this very temptation is giving me something to offer to God. I can now offer Him, at least, the sacrifice of my own will. I can deny myself, for His sake, and so show my love and gratitude. Shall I not do it?" In short, his faith, if it be lively, will supply him with motives in abundance, if he will but avail himself of them.

Or again, he may have recourse to yet another consideration. He will perhaps recall the Passion and Death of our Blessed Lord. He will, as it were, place the evil temptation, the sensual delight, the unclean indulgence on one side of the balance, and on the other he will place the Cross of Christ. He will look, in spirit, on to the dark, cloud-swept heights of Calvary, he will place himself thoughtfully and silently among the blaspheming Jews and cruel executioners, and he will gaze through the gloom at Jesus, stretched in agony upon the Cross. He will watch the sacred blood pouring forth from a thousand gaping wounds, from the gashes made by the cruel scourges, and from the lacerations on His sacred brow, pierced by innumerable thorns. He will listen as the drops of precious blood gather and then fall one by one upon the hard rock. He will look up into that tearful, disfigured, blood-stained face, and he will read, as in a book, the full truth of those words: "Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friend." Then, with tears in his eyes, will he turn towards the temptation with unspeakable loathing. Turn

towards it, yes, but to spurn it from him. To drive it away with disgust and horror, and with a mind full of shame and indignation, to think that such an act of treachery could ever have been a source of temptation at all. Then he will throw himself upon his knees, and pouring out his heart to his best and truest of fathers and friends, he will protest his readiness to endure every pain and every privation and worldly disgrace, rather than wound the sacred heart of his Saviour, and "crucify unto himself again the Lord of Glory, making Him a mockery." This, of course, supposes the tempted man to have faith. Yes, to be, in fact, as St. Peter says, "strong in faith." If he does not believe that God died for him, or—what comes very much to the same thing—if he does not recall the fact, and does not advert to it, it will have no power to beat down the tempter, and to brace him up, and give him nerve to resist.

Then, from the thought of the Sacred Passion, his faith may lead him on to the thought of the rewards that await those who have "fought the good fight, and have kept the faith." He will regard himself, not merely as a poor soul struggling with its vices, but as a member of Christ's great army. He will argue within himself: "I am not an effeminate worldling, but a warrior—in fact, a soldier of Jesus Christ. I have sworn, in holy baptism, to wage a ceaseless war against the enemies of Christ, who are also my enemies, to utterly renounce the devil with all his works, the world with all its pomps, and the flesh with all its

temptations. My General and Chief is no mere man, but the infinite and all-holy God. I am fighting in His presence, under His very eyes. He is Himself looking down upon me at this actual moment. He is reading my inmost thoughts. He sees my difficulties, my struggles, my wavering and hesitation. He is watching there, with the greatest interest and anxiety, to see if I will act nobly, loyally, and with courage. He yearns to see me strike a blow in defence of justice, honour, purity, and truth, for He longs to reward me and to place the imperishable crown of victory upon my head. But this is impossible unless I overcome and drive off the infernal foe. Then the valorous but hard-pressed soul will cry out from the depths of his heart: Courage, O my soul! For the issue of the battle lies in my own hands. "I am the Arbiter of my Fate. I know, for here again my faith assures me, that not all the devils in hell can injure a hair of my head until I, of my own free will, fling open the gates of the citadel of my heart, and let them in. Victory is mine, certainly and assuredly mine, if I have but the will to gain it. For God has pledged His divine word that He will never allow anyone to be tempted beyond his strength, but in every case will so make issue that he may be able to bear it." Who, with these thoughts before him, would be such a poltroon, such a craven coward, yea, such a drivelling imbecile, as to consent to sin, and to hand himself over to the enemy bound hand and foot? Who, on the contrary, would not feel himself burning with a holy eagerness to

beat down his oppressor, and to humble to the dust his rebellious passions and to deny them all sinful gratification ? With the eye of the Divine Master resting upon him, with victory within easy reach, and with the knowledge that endless rewards are awaiting him above, who, I ask, with all this to encourage him, would show the white feather, and betray his Sovereign and his God ? Now observe, these motives of resistance are born of a vivid faith. They are the outcome of a strong, earnest, and practical belief. Yes, for a man of faith is one to whom the invisible world lies open. He is one to whom heaven and hell, God and judgment are actual realities. His faith is fully awake. And the spiritual world is more real, more conspicuously present, more visible to the eyes of his soul than the material world all around him is to the eyes of his body. So much so, that it sways his conduct, and affects his views, and directs and controls his actions and his decisions. Thus it is abundantly evident why the inspired apostle bids us "resist, strong in faith."

While worldly-minded Catholics and half-hearted Christians fall again and again at the slightest breath of temptation, and will break the commandments of God for the sake of the most trifling gratification ; those who are accustomed to live in the presence of God, and to exercise their faith in the manner described, and to treat the truths of revelation as realities, will pass unscathed and unwounded through the most violent assaults of the enemy, and retain their baptismal innocence,

year after year, and often even to the very hour of their death. Oh, my brethren, if we would be safe from the snares of the devil and from all the seductions of the world and the flesh, then let us be in the fullest sense of the words "strong in faith."

Another important resolution we must take, if we wish to succeed in our struggle with evil, is to avoid the occasion. In nine cases out of ten our falls into sin must be ascribed to our own folly and imprudence, in exposing ourselves quite unnecessarily to the danger. Though our past experience ought to have taught us caution, and have satisfied us as to our weakness, yet we continue to run into danger, as though we were proof against all temptation. This want of caution, this utter disregard of consequences, denotes a mind sadly indifferent to the gravity of sin. For if we truly dreaded sin, which brings spiritual death, we would more studiously avoid perilous occasions. Just consider how cautious we are to avoid purely corporal death. If some serious disease, such as cholera or typhus fever, be about, do we wilfully enter into dwellings where it is raging? Do we not keep far away from the contaminated districts? It may be our very best friend; but, if he have leprosy, do we go near him? Will we so much as shake hands with him? Most decidedly not. And shall we take less care of the immortal soul than of the perishable body? Is not the soul more than the body? And is not eternal life more worth preserving than a life which is merely temporal? Undoubtedly. This we

acknowledge. This is according to common sense and right reason, as well as according to faith. Yet, it must be acknowledged that, in practice, we follow quite another view. We deliberately associate with companions who we know will lead us into sin. We enter into places which have already been the scenes of our most serious falls, and we read books and papers and magazines which we are well aware will suggest thoughts against our faith or against purity and modesty—thoughts which we may find it extremely difficult to dispel before they have sullied the innocence of our soul. In so doing, we are acting with the utmost rashness. We may even be said to be courting disaster, and coquetting with sin. And, like the silly moth, attracted by the candle's flickering light, the chances are that our imprudence will end in our being shrivelled up in the flame and destroyed.

Of course, a marked distinction must be made between wilful and unwilful exposure to temptation. There is a world of difference between our seeking the danger, and the danger seeking us. At first sight it may seem to matter very little how the temptation originates, provided that it comes. But who so argues has evidently not weighed the words of our Lord, with whom, after all, it rests to defend us or to leave us to our fate. Remember His words. He does not say : " Who finds himself in the danger shall perish in it " ; no, but He says : " Whosoever *loves* the danger shall perish." We may find ourselves in danger quite against our will, and then we cannot be said to " love " it ; but when we

purposely walk in to the occasion of sin, and expose ourselves to it, of our own free will, then we are truly said to "love the danger." The importance of withdrawing ourselves far from all that can lead us astray or that can become a stumbling block to us is indicated, in no uncertain manner, by our Divine Master Himself. What could possibly be more emphatic, more energetic, or more thorough than the command contained in His divine words: "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out," and so forth? There is no temporising, no trimming here. The remedy is drastic, in the extreme. Because the hand has become an occasion of sin, it is to be forthwith cut off, without delay and without remorse. And, for the same reason, the eye is to be violently severed altogether from the body. The words are, of course, metaphorical. What is meant is this: we must break with all that is a source of real and proximate danger of sin to us. If the occupation or the trade in which we are engaged, or if the companion or the friend whose society we seek, or the book or the place of amusement we love, be as dear to us, or seemingly as necessary to us, as is our right hand or our right eye, it matters not: we must sacrifice it and give it up. For it is not allowable to endanger our salvation, or to run imminent risks of damnation, for the sake of any temporal advantage or satisfaction whatsoever, no matter how painful it may be for us to relinquish it. Oh, how foolish we are when we disregard the warnings of Christ, who

loves us so dearly, in order to fly into the face of danger, and to rush in where even the angels themselves fear to tread ! But I must not delay further upon this point, because, before concluding, it is very important that I should touch upon yet another of great practical interest. I refer to the necessity of earnest prayer. It is a solemn fact, which cannot be too often impressed upon us, that we can do absolutely nothing, in the supernatural order, without God's assistance. We are so helpless, when left to our own devices, that the Devil, the World, and the Flesh are certain of gaining an easy victory unless we can secure the aid of One who is more powerful than they. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble," says our Lord God, "and I will deliver thee" (Ps. xlix. 15). And again : "Cry to Me, and I will hear thee" (Jer. xxxiii. 3).

By prayer we can easily avail ourselves of the help of God. For is He not our Father, and our most loving Benefactor, more ready to succour us than we are to be succoured ? And "if God be with us, who shall be against us ?" Indeed, with so many and such mighty helps, methinks we should never offend God—at all events, not grievously. God is infinitely more powerful than all our enemies combined, and we can always secure His gracious assistance merely for the asking, so there is really no excuse for us if we become a sport to our enemies, and perish, for want of flying humbly and lovingly to the outstretched arms of our Heavenly Father. Let us do so, therefore, with all earnestness and unlimited confidence. But we should also invoke

the holy angels and the blessed saints and patrons, and above all our ever immaculate and sweetest Mother, Mary, whose power to help us is as great as is her desire to do so. She has our interests more at heart than any other creature, and is full of compassion for us, more especially when under temptation, and in danger of succumbing. She knows, as no other, all that our salvation has cost her Divine Son, and she will do her utmost to ward off danger from us, and to defeat the malevolent designs and stratagems of our dreaded foes.

Then be of good courage, my dearly beloved children, and brace yourselves up to win the unfading crown reserved by God for every earnest soul who does his duty, and strives for the mastery. Our patience will not be tried for long. Though the battle is raging now, yet the Angel of Death will soon be sent to call us off the battlefield. A few years more of conflict, a few more years of trial, and then will follow a reward that will never end, a recompense as eternal as God Himself. That all of you, now listening to me here, may one day attain to that happy consummation, and secure the victor's crown, is the greatest blessing I can wish for you, from my heart, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen, Amen, Amen.

## ON THE VIRTUES WHICH ARE BORN OF STRIFE AND TRIBULATION

“As silver is tried by fire, and ~~as~~ gold is tried in the furnace, so the Lord trieth the hearts.”—Prov. xvii. 3.

**W**E can never realise too clearly that our present life is given to us, not for its own sake, nor for our present enjoyment, but solely as a preparation for the next. The relation between our present and our future existence is so close and intimate that it is impossible to introduce any change whatever in our moral conduct here, without introducing a corresponding change in our whole position hereafter.

Further, we must bear constantly in mind that we have but one life of preparation, and that whatever is to be done for the future must be crowded into our present brief worldly existence, so that we have no time to lose.

Hence, God mercifully arranges matters in such a manner that we find ourselves able, if only we have the good will, not only to exercise virtue and to develop and strengthen the good qualities we already possess, but also to acquire entirely new virtues, which would have and could have no existence except by reason of the very trials and diffi-

culties that come upon us. Take, for example, such virtues as patience, forbearance, resignation, and cheerful conformity to God's holy will.

These virtues, by their very nature, suppose contradictions, and trials, and hardships of every kind. Such trials may be distasteful and very hard to bear, but without them there would be no scope nor opportunity for the exercise of these beautiful virtues. Consider, for instance, patience. Patience is a truly magnificent virtue. The holy Scripture is loud in its praises, and promises the highest rewards to all who possess it. St. Paul says: "Patience is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Heb. x. 36). St. Luke says: "In patience you shall possess your souls." And St. James goes so far as to say: "Patience hath a perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing" (i. 4).

In these, and in many other passages of Holy Writ, too numerous to quote, we learn how greatly God prizes patience, and how generously He rewards it. It is, then, most precious and most desirable; and all of us should desire to possess it. But whence comes this virtue? How is it born? Who possesses it? Who can lay claim to this virtue, and to the immense rewards attached to it? Certainly not those whose lives are passed in unruffled peace. No! For we do not speak of the admirable patience of one who has nothing to try him, nothing to molest or to trouble his unclouded happiness. Do we praise the patience of a man who has it all his own way, and upon whom the world smiles and

lavishes its favours ? Evidently not. Patience supposes opposition. The very etymology of the word indicates as much. Patience is derived from the Latin word "*pator*," which means "I bear," "I endure," "I suffer." Hence to be patient means not merely to remain calm and cheerful and at peace when all is as we wish, but rather to remain calm and cheerful and at peace amid tribulation and opposition and suffering, and in the very storm and whirlwind of opposition.

To whom does the Holy Spirit of God especially point, as the most striking and the most eminent example of this virtue ? Who does it set before us as the very type of a patient man ? Oh, it is not anyone whose life lay along easy and smooth ways, but, quite the contrary, it points to one who was tried beyond all others—yea, almost beyond endurance ; to one upon whom fell disaster after disaster, and misfortune after misfortune, as thick as hailstones on a winter's day. "Hast thou," asks Almighty God, "hast thou considered my servant Job ? "

You have read Job's life. You remember how he began, indeed, as a rich and prosperous landowner. Wide and fruitful were his possessions, and innumerable his flocks and herds. Moreover, he possessed great barns full of grain, and a family of many children, and health and strength and a vigorous constitution. He was a holy, God-fearing man, leading a life of great virtue and sterling piety. And all went prosperously with him. Then the enemy of God and of man sought permission to

tempt him. The devil spoke to God, and intimated that Job served Him, not from disinterested love and loyalty, but because God petted him and spoiled him, and surrounded him with worldly goods, and made him prosperous and happy. In fact, the Holy Scripture represents Satan answering God, who had extolled the virtues of His faithful servant, and saying: True; but "doth Job fear God in vain?" (i. 9). "Hast thou not made a fence for him and his house, and all his substance round about, and blessed the works of his hands, so that his possession hath increased on the earth?" (10). In a word, Satan made out that Job feared God and worshipped Him faithfully, solely on account of what God did for him. "But stretch forth thy hand," continued the evil one, "and touch all that he hath, and *then* see if he will continue to bless thee" (11).

Now, the devil cannot read the secrets of a man's mind, nor can he see into his heart of hearts; but God can. And God beheld with great joy the genuine goodness and the solid virtue of Job, and He knew full well how greatly his sanctity would increase and develop under trial and affliction; so, realising how He could bring good out of evil, He gave Satan leave to molest him and to try him to the utmost of his power. "The Lord said to Satan, Behold all that he hath is in thy hand" (12), "but yet spare his life" (ii. 6). From this it is evident that the devil can work us no injury except in so far as God permits. Here God gives the devil a free hand, to do his worst, forbidding him only to take

life. The sequel merely goes to illustrate the power and the marvellous efficacy of divine grace, for though the devil tried his utmost to exasperate holy Job, all he did was in vain. Like precious gold, the fierce fires of temptation only enhanced and intensified the beauty of Job's soul. The devil first set about exciting the Sabeans to destroy the holy man's oxen and his asses and to put his servants and retainers to the sword. Then he caused a great fire to break out which burnt up his sheep, as well as the servants who were guarding them. And, as though that were not enough, he raised a terrific storm so that the house in which his sons and daughters were eating and drinking fell in, and crushed them all to death. All of which we read in the inspired Scriptures. Still Job held his peace and murmured not against the mysterious and inscrutable ways of Providence.

Though grieved and broken-hearted, he uttered no complaint. He merely exclaimed: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord" (i. 21).

But a yet greater trial still awaited him. So far, all that belonged to him, even his own beloved children, had been forcibly taken away from him; and he found himself suddenly childless and reduced to poverty. But his own person, so far, had been left untouched. Now he was to feel the hand of his adversary stretched out to afflict his very flesh.

The inspired writer tells us that now "Satan struck Job with a very grievous ulcer, from the sole of his feet, even to the top of his head" (ii. 7), so that he presented a picture of the most extreme misery and wretchedness, as he sat in agonising pain and sadness and desolation on the top of a dung-hill, and with a potsherd "scraped the corrupt matter" exuding from his sores and boils. Even his own wife rebuked him for his extraordinary patience, for day by day went slowly by, and yet he uttered no murmur of complaint. But he gently upbraided her, and said: "Thou hast spoken as one of the foolish women: (remember) if we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?" (ii. 10). "In all these things, Job did not sin with his lips" (ii. 10).

Did the world ever contemplate such heroic virtue? What boundless faith and loyalty to God! What unparalleled patience! He is the great example for all in trouble and distress. The reason his virtue is so highly esteemed is not merely that he was patient, but because he was patient under such heavy and crushing trials, and amid such provocations, and because he remained patient when everything was calculated to excite him to impatience. To the worldly-minded, and to those who cannot see beneath the surface, the trials that God sends good men seem cruel and unjust and undeserved. They cannot at all explain them. Many may ask: How it is that God can be good and merciful when He rewards His most faithful servants with nothing but misfortunes and tribulations? In their

ignorance and want of faith they dare to censure God, because they fail to see through His sublime and loving designs, and because they know not the virtue of sufferings, and have not learned how saints are made. They judge Him by their foolish human standards. But that is a very false and a very superficial way of judging. They look only at the trial, and do not consider its effects. If we could see as God sees, we should find that pain and suffering purify the soul, enable it to exercise virtues, and render it immeasurably more precious in the sight of God, and deserving of an altogether special place in His Kingdom.

Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that Job had been left unmolested, in the complete enjoyment of his vast estates and flocks and in the possession of excellent health. He might very likely have grown tepid and have fallen a prey to the dangers of riches, for "hardly shall a rich man enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." But even had he remained true to the end, and had saved his soul, how much lower a place he would now be occupying in the heavenly courts! His virtue would have been ordinary, not extraordinary. And as for his patience, that would be either non-existent or of the most ordinary quality, but certainly not heroic; for it would never have been exercised. And instead of deserving an exalted place among the saints, he would rank only among the ordinary souls who have never done anything nor suffered anything remarkable for the sake of God.

My brethren, let us apply these thoughts to our

own lives, and then we shall not complain so easily as we do now of every little tribulation. God sees our weakness and our apathy and cowardice, and consequently, in His mercy, He generally withholds from us the severer trials. He knows we have not the heroism to stand very much. But He would not deprive us of all opportunity of merit, so He sends us light crosses, small contradictions, and petty annoyances, which we really might turn to considerable profit, if we were earnest, and at all anxious to advance. There are very few who have not something to suffer, something to put up with.

We may suffer from some ailment. Perhaps we are a martyr to the gout, or dyspepsia, or to the colic; or perhaps we are pinched by poverty and unable to get many things we very much want; or our work may be hard and wearisome; or we may have reverses in business, or loss of fortune, or disappointments of various kinds, or exacting and uncongenial persons to live with.

The important point is to remember that all these trials come from God and are arranged by Him, and that they are intended to serve a special and most beneficent purpose. That, at least, is the intention of God, who sends them. Whether, as a fact, they do serve that purpose or not, depends upon ourselves—upon the spirit in which we accept them, and upon the use that we make of them. For, in this world, we are always on our trial.

There is no doubt whatever but that we suffer immense spiritual loss by neglecting the opportunities that come to us of exercising virtue. We

do not esteem them nor value them as we ought. We fail to realise that these pains and sufferings and losses and misfortunes are the coins with which we purchase heavenly treasures, and the precious gold and silver, in exchange for which we receive the priceless joys and glories of eternal life.

Well may the saints, who realised the value of spiritual things so far more truly than we do, rejoice in their tribulations. Well may St. Teresa beg that she might suffer and die for love of her Lord. Well might St. John of the Cross cry out, when about to render up his soul to God : " O happy suffering ! O blessed afflictions that have merited for me so great a reward ! "

On the other hand, how sad it is to witness even Christians complaining whenever any misfortune befalls them. They seem quite unable to understand the situation, and fail to realise that if God allows them to suffer, it can only be for their good. God acts towards us as a loving father towards his child. He will give us joy and happiness when it can be done without prejudice to our eternal welfare, just as a father will allow his child to enjoy himself when there is no danger to his health and life. But if a child has got hold of a sharp razor, or has picked up a loaded revolver, the father will wrest it from his grasp, and snatch it away, even with violence, lest the child should do itself harm. So, for analogous reasons, God sometimes takes from us our fortune or our health. The child does not understand, and grows very angry at being deprived of its plaything. It may cry and scream and kick and protest and

mutter harsh things, but if it could see into its father's heart, and read his motives, it would see at once that, so far from being cruel or unfeeling or unkind, he is actuated by his strong love, and by an earnest desire to spare his child pain and death ; and consequently that the very wisest and best policy is to submit.

So God acts towards us, but we have not confidence and faith enough to trust Him, but murmur at His action, and complain of His treatment of us, as though so skilled a physician could possibly make a mistake in selecting the remedies which are best for our spiritual diseases. No ; the operations may be painful, and the prescriptions may be bitter and nauseous, but they are designed to do us good ; and will in very truth do us good, unless we perversely turn them into occasions of sin by our petulancy, our folly, and our perversity. Amid all our pains, sorrows, trials, and tribulations, one thing we may always be assured of, and that is that God is our Father and our Friend, and that He loves us with a love that, in this life, we can never measure nor appreciate at its full value.

#### RESOLUTION.

Let us make up our minds to "mint money for heaven," by accepting gladly and cheerfully every trial and tribulation from the hands of God, and by turning them all to profit by our patience and complete conformity to God's will.

## SELF-KNOWLEDGE, OR WHAT TEMPTATIONS TEACH

“What doth he know, who hath not been tried?”  
—Eccles. xxxiv. 9.

**A**FTER the knowledge of God, there is nothing so useful and so necessary for us as the knowledge of ourselves. The great St. Augustine used to pray continually for a fuller knowledge of himself and of God. “*Noverim me, noverim Te: noverim Te, ut amem Te; noverim me, ut odio me habeam.*” “Lord, I beseech Thee that I may know myself, and that I may know Thee. Let me know Thee in order that I may love Thee, and let me know myself in order that I may hate myself.”

We have already considered the importance of knowing God; let us now consider the importance of knowing ourselves. The main reason why it is of such paramount interest, is because self-knowledge leads to humility, and humility is the very foundation of all the Christian virtues. We can never be really and truly humble until we have come to realise, in some measure, our extreme spiritual poverty, misery, and weakness. Nor shall we be induced to have continual recourse to God in prayer, until we are made thoroughly conscious of our dependence

upon Him, and of all that we owe to Him, and of our utter helplessness when left to ourselves.

Now, most men are utterly deficient in this respect and are strangers even to themselves. The picture they are accustomed to draw of themselves is far too flattering, and bears scarcely any resemblance to the reality. They almost invariably give themselves credit for virtues which they by no means possess, and are the fancied and self-satisfied possessors of all kinds of excellences and good qualities which are quite invisible even to their most intimate friends. Why, let me ask, is it universally admitted that "no man is a judge in his own case"? There is no doubt but that this sentence has passed into a proverb simply because it is the common and uniform experience of all ages, and of all peoples, that the average man will inevitably and instinctively favour his own interests, and prefer himself to others. Man cannot naturally take a really true and wholly impartial view of himself.

So again there is another saying of a Scotch poet, which has also passed into a proverb, and is quoted again and again with much reason and truth: "Oh, would some power the giftie gie us, to see ourselves as others see us."

Others see our faults, and notice our failings without any difficulty. Indeed, they seem to stand out clear and glaring to the rest of the world, while, strange to say, they remain quite hidden and invisible to ourselves. The reason is we love ourselves not wisely but too well, and are to our faults extremely blind.

It is not that we wilfully and deliberately and of set purpose deceive ourselves. No ; we need not be *consciously* dishonest. We wish to see ourselves as we are. But we don't succeed. We are simply blind. It is said that "all love is blind." This may be true, but of all the different varieties of love there is no love quite so stone-blind as self-love : and love of self is no doubt, to a greater or less extent, the characteristic of every man.

And while this pleasant but utterly false view of ourselves continues, how can we ever make any solid advance in humility and the other virtues ? Unless we can remove the veil from our eyes, and gaze upon our faults and our miseries, as they really are, in all their nakedness and deformity, we shall remain for ever at a spiritual standstill.

Now God, in His goodness, condescends to help us. He sends us trials and temptations to open our eyes, and these creatures of God enable us to detect the spiritual infirmities of our soul. So long as all is at peace, and there is nothing to put our virtue to the test, it is very easy to be brave and valiant, to have a high opinion of ourselves, and to boast of our courage ; very easy to flatter ourselves that nothing will ever move us, or turn us away from the path of strict virtue ; very easy to look down with surprise and contempt upon others who have fallen, and to blame them for their pusillanimity, and want of loyalty. All this is a consequence of ignorance. For "What," asks the wise man, "doth he know, that hath not been tried ?" (Eccles. xxxiv. 9).

Now, one of the most practical ways of forcing

upon us a true realisation of our frailty, and an accurate knowledge of ourselves, is to visit us with temptations. They come and prove what we are worth, and enable us to see if our fervent declarations of loyalty and fidelity to God are genuine, or mere empty boasts.

Examples are constantly occurring. Let us take one from the inspired pages of Holy Writ. We will consider the case of the great St. Peter, the prince of the apostles. Now, it must be borne in mind that he was undoubtedly a highly favoured man, chosen by our Lord Himself to be one of His disciples. He was, by nature, impetuous and generous, and there is abundant evidence to show that he was strongly attached to our Divine Lord, and loved Him with all his heart. But, with all this, he remained singularly ignorant of himself, and was apt to give himself credit for a stability and steadfastness of character which he was in reality very far from possessing. It was not until temptation actually came and tore the bandage from his eyes, that he began to see and to estimate himself at his true value. And so is it often with ourselves.

You remember the account as given by the Evangelists. How, after Jesus and His disciples had supped, "they went out unto Mount Olivet. Then Jesus, turning to His disciples, said, "All you shall be scandalised in Me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed" (Matt. xxvi. 30, 31). When Peter heard these words, he could not conceal his astonishment, indeed he could hardly believe his

ears. What ! Scandalised in Christ ! All ? No, not *all*, at all events ; this was more than he was at all prepared to admit. Perhaps the other disciples might Well, possibly. He would not answer for them, but as regards himself he was absolutely certain that such a statement could not be true. So, unable to contain himself any longer, he exclaimed, without the slightest misgiving :

“ Although all should be scandalised in thee, I will never be scandalised ” (33). The words he uttered were uttered, no doubt, with great sincerity ; yet they were false. The explanation is, he did not really know himself, and mistook the wish for the deed. So our Lord, who knew Peter, and could read him through and through, and was fully aware of his weakness, turned towards him, and addressed him now personally, and in the singular number, and said with great solemnity : “ Amen, I say to thee, that in this night, before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice ” (34). Here, brethren, you will observe, our Lord condescends to enter into particulars, and warns Peter, not only of the cruel and cowardly denial, but, to add emphasis to His words, He now points out the very time—“ in this night ”—and the special circumstances—“ before the cock crow.”

Now, surely, St. Peter will come to his senses, and be willing to be warned and corrected ?

Now, surely, he will realise his weakness, and ask his Divine Master to strengthen him, and rescue him from the perpetration of so ghastly a crime. No. Nothing of the kind ! His self-love is so great that he cannot bring himself to admit that he could ever

be guilty of so dastardly an act. He is confident that he could never so far forget himself. So, still hopelessly deluded by his fatal self-confidence, he replies: "Yea! Though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee" (35). "I will go with thee to prison and to death."

Then our Lord, seeing his obstinacy, said no more. There was nothing left but to let him learn his lesson by actual experience. Temptation must come and write the lesson on his heart in letters of fire.

You remember the sequel. Jesus was soon after seized and dragged before the judgment seat of Caiaphas, the high priest. And Peter followed Him, afar off, then "going in, he sat with the servants, that he might see the end." And while the cruel soldiers spat into Christ's adorable face, and buffeted Him and struck Him (67) with the palms of their hands, Peter sat without, in the court (69). "And presently, there came to him a servant maid, saying: Thou also wast with Jesus, the Galilean." What a glorious opportunity is now afforded the apostle to stand up in defence of his Divine Master! What a splendid chance to put his brave words into execution. Does he confess with joy his relationship with Jesus? Does he cry out: "Yes! It is my privilege to acknowledge Him as my Divine Lord and Master, for even though all should deny Him, I never will"? No. He is silent. He is afraid. He hangs down his head. All his courage melts away at the sound of the voice of an impudent serving-maid, as mists melt before the rising sun.

Oh, what a collapse! What a crushing defeat!

At last he finds courage to speak, but it is only to deny Christ before them all, crying out : " I know not what thou sayest " (70). Then, feeling very uncomfortable, Peter " went out of the gate, and, as he did so, another maid saw him, and pointing him out, said to them that were there, ' This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth.' "

Thereupon he grew more vehement and annoyed, and once again repeated his denial, but this time with an oath (72), saying, " I know not the man." Observe, he would not even pronounce the name of Jesus ; he feigned to know nothing of Him, not even His name. He merely swore that he knew not the man. The man ! That is how he referred to the Incarnate Son of God. " I know not the man."

But our Lord had foretold that Peter would deny Him on three distinct occasions, so his temptation was not yet over. Hence, St. Matthew tells us that after a short interval some standing close by came up to Peter, and probably recognising him and noting his provincial intonation and accent, said : " Surely thou also art one of them (*i.e.*, the disciples), for even thy speech doth discover thee."

This was altogether too much for St. Peter. For this time he grew really angry. In fact, the Evangelist narrates that he began not only to deny, but to curse and to swear (74) that he knew nothing about Christ, and had nothing whatever to do with him (xxvi. Matt.). Thus, he who but a short while ago protested that he would die with Christ and share in His ignominy and sufferings rather than deny Him, is heard disclaiming all connection with Him,

and filling the court with his noisy and repeated oaths that he knows not "the man."

However, during all this time Peter was learning his lesson. He was being slowly and painfully taught the truth. The crowing of the cock recalled those prophetic words of Christ which he had so boldly contradicted. He felt humbled and like one beaten to the dust. His strong resolutions, like weak reeds, had all bent and broken under him so soon as their strength was actually put to the test. He no longer confided in himself, nor in his own resolutions, but went out and wept bitterly.

The lesson was indeed hard and bitter in the extreme. Poor Peter was a changed man. The serious fall had let light in where all had been darkness. It was as though some bright searchlight had flashed out and had lit up the whole of his interior, and had disclosed to him the weakness and instability of his own unassisted nature. He had not estimated the strength of temptation, nor the force and influence of the occasions of sin; and he had forgotten our Lord's warning: "Without Me you can do nothing."

But now he was humble and had learned wisdom. No longer would he trust to himself. Henceforth he sought his strength in God alone, and prayed unceasingly for grace, which alone enables us to triumph over all our foes.

The result was that he who, alone and unassisted, was ashamed to acknowledge Jesus at the challenge of a mere servant maid, now learned by the assistance of divine grace to confess Jesus before kings and

governors. He who had not courage to profess his faith to an inferior and a menial, now shows himself ready not only to confess it, but even to suffer and to die for it.

What a contrast between Peter, in the hall of Caiaphas, cursing and swearing that he knew not the man, and the same Peter, some years later, confessing Christ before the powerful and cruel emperor Nero, and submitting to a most agonising martyrdom in testimony of his faith, and for sake of the love he bore to his Divine Master.

What fruit are we to draw from this example ? Well, as temptations taught St. Peter, so they are constantly teaching us. Our repeated falls teach us what we really are. They reveal to us our innate imbecility and weakness. They keep us humble and modest and mean in our own estimation, and ready to seek help from on high. How often we, like Peter, resolve, yet fail miserably, when the occasion for the carrying out of our resolutions actually arises ! How repeatedly we promise and yet break our promise. If with all the experience which life brings, if with all our past faults and failings reproaching and upbraiding us, we are still so proud and so self-confident, what would be our pride and arrogance were we left without trial and without these sad experiences ?

Thus do creatures—for trials, contradictions, misfortunes, and temptations are all creatures of God—teach us to know ourselves, and establish us in humility. And when once we are truly humble our path to heaven becomes easy and assured. For

“ God, who resists the proud, gives grace to the humble ” ; and while “ whosoever exalteth himself shall be humbled,” so, on the other hand, “ whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

#### RESOLUTION.

Humble yourselves, dear brethren, under the mighty hand of God, and from the experience of your many past falls and broken resolutions, learn to distrust yourselves altogether and to place all your hope and confidence in God alone.

## OCCASIONS OF MERIT

“Because thou wast pleasing to God, it was necessary that temptation should try thee.”—Tobias.

WE have already considered two great purposes that creatures serve. In the first place they teach us to know God ; and in the second place they teach us to know ourselves. In addition to these two, they serve a third important purpose, and that is to exercise and develop our virtues, and to render them more precious in the sight of God.

In order the better to realise this, we must begin by calling to mind a great leading principle, which will go far to explain some of God's strange dealings with men, and that is that God, who has a deep and ardent love for us, desires, not only that we should save our souls, but also that we should obtain a high place in the kingdom of heaven. He would not have us to remain always mere babes and sucklings. No. He wishes to see us grow in virtue, and become daily holier and holier in His sight. He longs to see us emulate the example of the saints, and to mount higher and ever higher on the ladder of perfection.

But how is this desire to be accomplished ? How are the virtues of faith and hope and charity and brotherly love and the rest to increase in strength and power ? How ? Well, it will be found that

our virtues grow very much as our muscles grow, viz., by exercise, by constant use, by being frequently called into play. A muscle that is never used soon loses its strength and elasticity, and may even become altogether atrophied and useless. In like manner, a virtue that is never called into play is liable to grow weaker and weaker, till, at last, it almost disappears altogether.

Virtues which have never been tried are in any case of very little value, and will remain to the end in a most rudimentary condition. Take, for instance, such a common virtue as that of brotherly love. If we are always surrounded by those who are fond of us, and who agree with us, and treat us with consideration and kindness, we are not given much opportunity of exercising charity, considered as a virtue. In fact, there is no heroism in loving them in return. And so long as these conditions remain, our task is an exceedingly light one, and deserving of little merit. This our Lord Himself implies, in the words He addressed to His disciples when He said : " If you love them (only) that love you, *what reward shall you have ?* Do not even the publicans this ? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others ? Do not also the heathens this ? " (Matt. v. 46, 47). In these few words He clearly infers that in loving those only who love us, we scarcely rise above nature. That is easy enough. In fact, anyone can so love, yes, even pagans and publicans ; but from us, who are neither heathens nor publicans, but Christians, He expects a great deal more. " I say, to you, Love your enemies, do good

to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust " (Matt. v. 44, 45).

But, in order to be able to love our enemies, we must possess enemies ; and to be able to pray for those who calumniate and persecute us, we must actually meet with such persons in actual life. There is no difficulty in finding instances in abundance of this heroic charity in the lives of the saints. Look at St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr. No doubt he exercised charity from the first ; but it was the difficulties and the hostility which he met with which enabled him to exercise and develop this virtue in such an heroic degree. If he had had only friends to deal with, his position would have been an easy one, but his very sanctity raised up enemies and brought down upon him the hatred of the world. The very beauty and truth of his doctrine stirred up the anger and rage of his listeners, who were stung by the truth and directness of his reproaches. They turned away from him, closed their ears to his words, then covered him with insults, and finally, " ran violently upon him, and casting him forth without the city " (Acts vii. 57), they took up stones, and flung them at him in anger. Yet, notwithstanding this, the saintly deacon never ceased to exercise charity and patience towards them. At last he was struck bleeding to the ground, and wounded in every limb, but amid the murderous shower of stones, instead of calling down

maledictions upon his murderers, he prayed for them, and cried out with his last breath: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"—and with these loving and forgiving words on his trembling lips, he, as the Scripture expresses it, "fell asleep in the Lord" (59), having won the martyr's crown.

Now, it is clear that the charity of this noble martyr would never have been so splendid, and so heroic, but for the opposition and the cruelty of his enemies, which afforded him an opportunity of exercising it in the highest degree. In short, if we are to make any advance in virtue we must have opportunities given us, and must expect to be tried and tempted.

Or take an altogether different virtue, viz., the virtue of faith. Among those conspicuous for their strong, sterling trust in God, Abraham is perhaps one of the most famous. In fact, the faith of Abraham is become a proverb in every land. But what made Abraham's faith so much more admirable, and so much more heroic than the faith of others? It is that he exercised it under so much greater difficulties. It is because it was so severely tried. Any man, however feeble in virtue, may easily believe a statement which seems reasonable, or a promise that involves no difficulty. But to believe what bristles with difficulties, and to accept without doubt what seems not only unlikely, but impossible, to our own limited reason, is a totally different thing. Yet it was just in this that Abraham so excelled. And if we study his history we shall see the use God made of creatures in exercising and

purifying and intensifying His faithful servant's virtue. Take one or two cases, by way of illustration.

If we read the Book of Genesis, we shall find that God promised Abraham that He would make of him a mighty nation (xii. 2). In fact, on one occasion He brought Abraham out into the night and said : " Look up to heaven and number the stars, if thou canst ; and He said to him, So shall thy seed be. Abraham believed God, and it was reputed to him unto justice " (xv. 5, 6).

Now, there was need of strong faith to believe these words of God, even when they were first uttered, for though Abraham was married, both he and his wife were advanced in years, and, humanly speaking, they were far too old to have offspring. In fact, Sara, his wife, did not believe a word of what was promised, but simply " laughed incredulously behind the door of the tent " (xviii. 10). Abraham, on the contrary, realising that God, who made the laws of nature, can unmake them or alter or reverse them, never hesitated or faltered in his belief. But a much severer trial of his faith was at hand ; for when Isaac, his son, had grown up to be a comely youth, God appeared to Abraham, and said : " Abraham ! Abraham ! And he answered, Here I am. He said to him, Take thy only begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision ; and there shalt thou offer him for an holocaust, upon one of the mountains which I will show thee " (xxii. 2).

Now, pause for a moment to consider the thoughts

that must have filled the mind of the old patriarch on hearing these words. Here was a loving father, devoted to his son, who was the joy and delight of his old age, told to sacrifice him for a holocaust, which is a sacrifice in which the victim is wholly consumed, in which nothing is left but the mere ashes. And behold, Abraham, who would not willingly cause his son the slightest pain, nor touch so much as a hair of his head, is commanded, forthwith, to slay him on the altar.

Oh, how that command must have wrung the heart of the aged parent! How deep and unutterable must have been his grief. How could he nerve himself to put an end to that young life so full of hope and of promise? But if this command was a trial of obedience, it was yet much more a trial of faith, for how could he reconcile this command with the promise God had made to him? He was told that he was to be the father of a great nation, that his descendants were to be as numerous as the very stars. And now, when he is over a hundred years old, he is commanded to sacrifice his only son. Well might he argue: Isaac is the only boy I have. I can never have another. He is the sole hope of my family being carried on. If I slay him, then there is no longer any possibility of my having grandchildren and great-grandchildren: and yet I am told my posterity are to outnumber the stars of heaven!

The promise and the command seemed contradictory and irreconcilable. A man of less virtue would have faltered and been troubled, and his faith would very likely have given way under the awful

strain. But Abraham never hesitated. He could not himself explain the impass, he could not see how to interpret the situation ; but throughout this darkness and ignorance he bravely clung to the divine will. He knew that God cannot fail, cannot deceive, cannot break His promise, cannot be put in the wrong. He knew that in darkness as in light, in things difficult as well as in easy things, His will is supreme, and must be followed. So, whatever it might cost him, and however severely he might suffer in heart as well as in mind, he determined to set aside all other considerations, and to carry out God's will, and to sacrifice the boy whom he loved even more than himself.

We all know the sequel, and how, at the last moment, God sent an angel, who stayed the hand already raised to plunge the knife into the victim, and released him and let him free. Then God spoke to His faithful servant and said : " By my own self have I sworn ; because thou hast not spared thy only begotten son for My sake, I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is by the seashore. . . And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice " (Gen. xxii. 16-18).

The faith of Abraham is so heroic and so superior to the faith of most men, not because he believed, but because he believed what was so difficult to believe, yea, because he believed what seemed so impossible !

It is the way with God to try those whom He especially loves, and to visit them with every variety

of cross and affliction, because by that means He exercises their virtue and brings out all that is best in them.

There is an extraordinary analogy running all through the realms of grace and of nature, and in this as in other things. Thus, in the order of nature we notice that there are certain sweet-smelling, aromatic plants that give forth their delicious scent only when they are beaten and bruised, and trodden under foot. Then, but not till then, do they reveal the sweetness and the exquisite fragrances that lie hidden within them.

So is it with God's chosen servants. Trial and suffering often show forth a degree of virtue, and of strength and fervour, that we never would have suspected. And, as incense never smells so sweet as when it is thrown on the glowing charcoal, and left there to burn, so these favoured and heroic natures are never seen so pure, so loyal, and so strong as when they are suffering in the furnace of temptation.

Hence, though we may sympathise with them in their difficulties, we cannot help rejoicing and thanking God at the sight of their trials; for we know that these very trials are the source and occasion of their merit and of their everlasting honour and glory. God cannot treat indifferently one who has suffered much for His sake, and one who has never suffered anything. To illustrate this we may again take an example from the natural order.

Consider an earthly king and his attitude towards his people. He may indeed love all his faithful

soldiers, but he will most certainly not have as high an esteem for the soldier who has lived in barracks, and has never fired a shot, except in mimic warfare, as he has for the veteran warrior, who has been through a succession of campaigns, and who has fought in many a bloody field, and has risked his life a hundred times over for king and country ; now charging the foe under a galling fire, and now carving a way to victory with his flashing blade, in countless hard-fought battles.

Similarly, God, our Captain and our King, who tells us that " man's life on earth is a warfare," looks upon a soul that has laboured and struggled in His service, and who has passed through the fierce fires of temptation, very differently to the manner in which He looks upon one who has lived in peace and who has scarcely ever felt its scorching and withering breath.

" Blessed is the man," says the Holy Spirit, " who endureth temptation." Why ? " Because, when he hath overcome he will receive the crown of life." Every evil inclination resisted, every temptation overcome, every sinful passion crushed and slain, is a battle won, and a victory gained. God longs to reward us and to encircle our brows with an ever richer and richer diadem, if we will only let Him. But before we can win we must fight ; before we can conquer we must be attacked.

God might, if He so willed, suppress all difficulties and all opposition—but to do so would be to deprive us of our opportunity and to defraud us of all occasion of heroic virtue.

We all have our difficulties. Some of these may arise from the opposition of the world ; some may arise from our own family, from our dependents and subordinates ; some from ourselves and our own passions and untamed nature ; but from whatever quarter they come, they all afford us precious and splendid opportunities of advancing in virtue

“ Count it all joy,” says St. James, “ when you fall into divers temptation.”

Unfortunately, many of us have not the spirit of a true soldier. We neither overcome nor desire to overcome. Instead of drawing fruit from our temptations, and turning them to good account, and fighting with courage and perseverance, we basely yield through sheer indifference or cowardice or weakness.

Our great examples are the martyrs, whose heroism and loyalty put us to the blush. How light and absolutely paltry are our trials compared to theirs ; how insignificant our sufferings and our losses ! Yet they cheerfully sacrificed all—yes, all—possessions, liberty, and life itself in the great cause.

Among all the inhabitants of heaven the martyrs are the noblest and the best. Their glory adds a lustre even to the celestial court. Yet we should look in vain for the martyrs had God not allowed persecutors and tyrants, and torture and violent deaths. Think of such magnificent characters as Blessed Thomas More and Cardinal Fisher, and all that they owe to that cruel and vindictive monster Henry VIII., by whose infamy they won the martyr's crown. Or call to mind Father Campion

and Margaret Clitheroe and their fellow-sufferers, and remember that, had God not permitted Queen Elizabeth to tyrannise and persecute, they never could have attained to such a height of honour and glory as they now enjoy in Heaven.

Though the *intention* of evil kings and princes is merely to persecute and to destroy, yet God overrules their acts, so that while they imagine they are crushing and humiliating the holy ones of God, they are in reality weaving precious crowns of everlasting glory about their heads and adding a more exquisite beauty and splendour to their souls.

#### RESOLUTION.

Resolve to give God a free hand, seek not to check the action of His providence in your regard, and He will provide you with countless opportunities of growing stronger in His love and more zealous in His service.

## ON THE PURPOSE OF PAIN

“Through many tribulations we enter into the Kingdom of God.”—Acts xiv. 27.

2

**A**MONG the great characteristics of our present existence are pain and sickness and sorrow. The hospitals and infirmaries and dispensaries scattered all over the land, and the multitudes of physicians and surgeons and druggists and nurses, all testify to the prevalence of sickness, infirmity, disease, and of mental and bodily disorders of all kinds. To these must be added disasters that no doctor, however clever, can cure ; such as poverty, want, loss of friends, and cruelties and injustices, and personal violence, and the rest. In short, no one, looking over the face of the earth, and contemplating the multitudes that fill our great towns and cities, can fail to realise the truth of those inspired words : “ Man, born of woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries ” (Job xiv. 1).

Yet we must remember that though pain and anguish now enter into the very texture of man's life, and accompany him to a greater or less extent along the whole of his journey from the cradle to the grave, nevertheless, this was not according to God's original plan. Man, as he came forth from the hands of his Creator, was completely happy and contented. He knew nothing of suffering. Suffering

is a state of being of which he had no actual experience. And had he remained innocent, this blissful ignorance would have remained, and God would have translated him, without suffering, from the simpler joys of earth to the sublimer joys of heaven.

But alas ! As the Holy Spirit reminds us, " When man was in honour, he did not understand, but became like the senseless beasts " (Ps. xlviii. 13). He committed sin, rebelled against God, and was guilty of the blackest treason. By his own deliberate action he threw his whole nature out of gear, and drew upon himself and on his descendants dire punishment. " By sin," writes St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (v. 12), " death entered into this world." He mentions death only, but that word includes all lesser trials, all the ills and pains and diseases that lead to death, and culminate in death.

This doctrine sets before us indeed a very depressing and melancholy picture. But still there is a bright side to it, and it is that bright side that I invite you to consider this morning.

In the first place, it must be admitted that were we wholly free from sin, and from all inclination to sin, then suffering would undoubtedly be out of place. But, since we are all sinners and exceedingly prone to evil, the atmosphere of pain and anguish and trial and trouble proves to be the most suitable and the best for our present condition. And God permits us to feel the stings of misfortune and the opposition of our fellow men, and the anguish of

failure and disappointment, and the thousand other ills and miseries that flesh is heir to, because He knows how immensely such things help us in our struggle after perfection.

When a child is perfectly well, and in the enjoyment of robust health, naturally we do not force upon him nauseous drugs. But when this same child has fallen ill, and lies in danger of losing his life, then his very state and condition often oblige us to compel him to swallow bitter draughts and to submit to painful operations. So is it in the spiritual order. Man was once innocent and happy. Now he is spiritually sick and in danger of growing worse, so God, the Supreme Physician, sends him trials and troubles, which will help him on his way to heaven. Even the most cursory observation will enable us to see the truth of this statement. What is it that makes a man forget God, and lose interest in spiritual things? Surely it is uninterrupted prosperity and continual success. A life of pleasure, of amusement, of self-gratification, freely indulged in by one who enjoys the best of health, becomes more and more absorbing, and renders a man selfish and self-centred, and indifferent to all else. His days go by in a round of pleasure, and he has neither time nor inclination to reflect on eternity or on judgment, on heaven or on hell. If the world supplies him with entertainment enough, he feels no immediate need for anything else. He goes on, by sheer force of custom, sipping at the sweets that life affords him, and scarcely thinking of the morrow. He grows careless in the exercise of his religion. Little

by little he neglects his duties to God. He abandons prayer, and finally lives for this world alone. This is easily explained. In point of fact, man's mind and heart are very narrow, and if the world is allowed to fill them, there will be no room for more important things. How are such people to be saved from themselves ? How are they to be shaken from their fatal sleep ? They are too much preoccupied to give heed to the soft whispering of their conscience ; or to pay attention to the warnings of the preacher. Nothing will tear the bandage from their eyes but some sudden trial, some great misfortune.

Hence it is not an act of cruelty, but an act of immense mercy, if God takes such a man and throws him down upon a bed of sickness, and racks his limbs with pain, and compels him to abandon his life of dissipation and thoughtlessness, and to lie helpless on the brink of the grave. Then, in the silence of the long, dreary nights, when sleep forsakes his pillow, he is given time and opportunity to think and to ponder over great and eternal truths ; time to enter into himself, time to question himself on his past worldly life, and on the little preparation he is making to meet his God, and his just and angry Judge.

Oh, how numerous are the souls now reigning with God in heaven, who but for some such merciful intervention would now be writhing in hell ! How many who, while rushing at full speed on their downward path, deaf to the entreaties of parents and friends, and even of the minister of God Himself, have been arrested and turned back, when almost

at the very gates of hell, by some mercifully arranged misfortune, which has wrecked all their ambitious schemes, and perhaps brought them into public disgrace and obloquy !

They lived for the world : they cared for nothing but worldly success, and social station, and name and fame. And God takes their idol and crushes it and crumbles it to pieces before their face, and humbles them, so that the world turns its back upon them, and honours them no longer. And then, though they may be staggered for a time, they begin by degrees to realise the hollowness and emptiness of worldly greatness and success, and to aspire after something more stable and more worthy of their immortal spirit.

Sickness, sudden poverty, loss of friends, and other misfortunes are the good, kind, though bitter remedies our Divine Physician employs to cure us of our ailments.

There are few things so remarkable as the manner in which men change and soften under misfortune. Indeed, suffering seems to act almost as a sacrament. The proud, hard, imperious character, which has been as unyielding as granite to every invitation, and whom tears and entreaties could not move, and who has refused to forgive, and to acknowledge his crimes, or even to pray for light and grace, becomes another being under the influence of sorrow and of personal suffering.

I have known a man, as hard as iron, as unyielding as the flint, transformed into a new being so soon as he was brought under the influence of a deep and

heart-breaking affliction. Oh, how many, now basking in the bright sunshine of God's joy-giving presence, must be thanking Him for the so-called "misfortunes" which caused them, before it was too late, to turn away from sin, to break with old habits, and to enter upon the path which finally led them to heaven. For, as the apostle reminds us, "through many tribulations we enter into the kingdom of God."

Then there is another immense service that trials and hardships render us. They enable us, even in this life, to atone for sin.

We are all transgressors. "If any man say he is without sin, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Now, as sure as sin is committed, so surely must it be atoned for. Even sin which has been forgiven, and wholly blotted out, *so far as the guilt is concerned*, often has to be satisfied for, and punished here or hereafter. Yes. Punishment follows sin, as the shadow follows the substance. We must suffer either in this life or the next : either in this world or amid the agonising flames of Purgatory. It is a great grace and mercy to be allowed to do our penance in this world, and we ought to be very grateful to God when He sends us such crosses and contradictions as may enable us to wipe off our debt, at least in part, before we appear before Him in judgment. And this for several reasons. Firstly, because the pains of this life are immeasurably lighter and more bearable than those of the next. In fact, there is no comparison between them.

Secondly, because every pain and affliction

cheerfully endured while we are still pilgrims upon earth is not merely expiatory but also meritorious, whereas, once we have passed into the great Beyond, there is an end to all further merit. We may suffer, and suffer acutely, but though we thereby satisfy for forgiven sin, we can add nothing to our recompense nor in any way increase our eternal reward. Wise, therefore, shall we be if we value and make much of the hardships and misfortunes of the present life, and turn them all to good account by receiving them all from our Heavenly Father with love and gratitude, and by asking Him to accept them in satisfaction for our sins.

Indeed, as each day we keep adding to our debt of punishment, by our daily falls and imperfections, so each day we should try and pay off some portion of this debt. In short, we should imitate the saints, who were not satisfied with the trials sent upon them by the Providence of God, but industriously added to them themselves. By constant acts of self-denial, by mortifications and penances and hard labour, they were perpetually punishing themselves for their venial offences and small imperfections, so that at death they either passed straight into the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision, or at least after a very short detention in Purgatory.

There is not now time to draw out and to consider all the many other advantages of earthly trials and sufferings, so I will mention but one more, and then I must conclude.

Sufferings and losses and disappointments are of great use in detaching our hearts from earth and in

fixing them on heaven. They help to make us realise that we are but pilgrims, that we have not here a lasting city, and that our real home is above. It is astonishing to see how prosperous men cling with all their affection to the things of earth, and how they place all their joy and happiness in what is transitory and perishable. Their thoughts and their anxieties are concerned with their horses and their hounds, with their parties and their banquets, with hunting and motoring and dancing and entertaining and money-making and investments, and these innumerable occupations leave them little time for supernatural things. They flitter and flutter through life as a butterfly, tasting the sweets from every earthly flower, with never a thought of their eternal future. And so they often continue, until God at last, in His mercy, sends them some terrible affliction or some dire misfortune which rudely awakens them from their foolish dreams, and arouses them to a vivid sense of the stern realities and awful responsibilities of life.

The sudden shock of some crushing trial, such as a severe sickness, or the death of some boon-companion, or perhaps the total loss of fortune, may often be the very salvation of a worldly-minded man. It enables him to realise the utter emptiness and worthlessness of present things, and will lead him to value alone the imperishable and only satisfying delights of eternity.

Learn, then, to turn every misfortune to account, and bear ever in mind that "all things co-operate unto good for such as are to be saved." As the

great St. Paul says : “ *A Domino corripimur, ut non cum hoc mundo damnemur.*” (We are corrected and chastised now in order that we should not be condemned with the wicked at the last day.)

#### RESOLUTION.

Resolve to receive every trial, cross, and affliction as most precious gifts from God and to extract from them all the good that He, in His infinite love, intends.

## PASSIONS SHOULD BE DIRECTED, NOT DESTROYED

“The wisdom of the flesh is death; but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace.”—Rom. viii. 6.

**F**REE will is one of the greatest of God's gifts to man, in the natural order. It distinguishes him from all other visible beings, raises him above them, and gives him a certain resemblance even to the angels and to God Himself. It secures him self-control and constitutes him sovereign of his own actions. It enables him to choose between good and evil, to follow the path of virtue or the path of vice. Further, it invests his actions with a special value, if they are done according to justice, and with a special guilt and deformity if they are not. It enables him to merit an increase of grace, and even to win eternal life. In short, its use or abuse determines his final destiny. For, whether we are to rejoice with the saints and angels in heaven for all eternity, or to be tormented with the damned for ever in hell, is a question which will be decided according to the use we make of our free will during our brief earthly career.

This being the case, it becomes a matter of extreme interest and importance to ascertain by

what means we may most strengthen and influence our free will for good, and urge it on in pursuit of virtue rather than of vice. For we must here observe that though the will is undoubtedly *free*, yet it cannot act except under the influence of some stimuli. Its freedom consists in its ability to choose between motives, not in the power of acting without a motive. It may, indeed, follow a weak motive in preference to a strong one ; a bad one rather than a good one ; but a motive of some kind there must be or it will not move at all. An act which is not the fruit of some motive is not a human act—is not the act of a reasonable being.

Everybody, whether king or peasant, whether saint or devil, whether hero or coward, acts under the influence of some stimulus. As St. James puts it : “ Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured ” (1. 14). These stimuli are most various. With one person it may be the inordinate love of money with another it may be ambition. With the philosopher it may be a thirst for knowledge, with the courtier it may be a yearning after royal favours. In short, when men let themselves go, they are drawn here or there, as the case may be, by the various motives that the world sets before them, as leaves are blown hither and thither by the winds. These motives are often of quite astonishing violence. They will exert a most extraordinary influence, and sometimes even drive men out of their own country, and across the stormy seas—as, for instance the love of gold which has carried thousands of Europeans across the

Atlantic to the famous goldfields of California. Yea, it will sometimes cause men to face even death itself, as in the case of the soldier who "seeks the bubble reputation in the cannon's mouth."

Now we do not say that all worldly motives are necessarily and intrinsically bad. All we assert is that—speaking generally—worldly motives lead men away from God. For their tendency is to attach the heart and affections to earthly things, and to endanger one's salvation. Consequently, if we wish to please our Divine Master and to sanctify our soul, we must be upon our guard, and do our utmost not to be ruled over and governed by such attractions.

That we are bound to resist attractions that are likely to lead us astray is undeniable. The only question we have to ask ourselves is *how* ? There are two ways. The first is simply to resist and oppose them directly, with all our might and main, to try and crush and destroy the attraction itself, to eradicate it utterly, root and branch. This is one way, but not the best way, nor the wisest way. In the first place it is exceedingly difficult ; in the second place it is slow ; in the third place the result is very uncertain, for it is opposing our very nature and inclinations. Further, it is a great waste, since a strong attraction is a real force, and should not be destroyed, but rather utilised and turned to account.

How then should we deal with these worldly attractions and incentives, such as love of money, ambition, desire to excel, thirst for power and fame, and so forth ? What course should we follow so

that they may not lead us away from God nor endanger our salvation ?

At present they are enemies of our salvation, and I must deal with them as with other enemies. Now, if I have a powerful enemy, bent upon doing me an injury, what should I do in order to defend myself ? I might try perhaps to kill him. True. But if, instead of killing him, I could win him over to my side, and convert him into a friend, that would be far better still. Once my friend I would not object to his power. In fact, once my friend the more powerful he is the better pleased I shall be.

So with regard to any strong evil attraction that is leading us away from God. Instead of killing it, we must win it over, and use it to lead us nearer God. That is to say, we must not destroy the motive, but lift it up to a higher and nobler plane, and give it a new direction. For observe : as a rule the desire that leads us away from God is not wrong in itself. It is wrong simply on account of the object towards which it is directed. Consequently, we have not to root out such a desire from our soul, but to purify it by finding a proper and a worthy object upon which it can expend itself.

An example will make this clearer than many words.

Take a man who feels within himself an insatiable thirst for gold—for there are many such. His one idea is to increase his fortune, to add to his possessions, and to grow richer and richer as the days go by. Now, this man is in a very dangerous state. He runs a great risk of losing his soul, for the love of money is the root of all evil. Quite true. But

what is it precisely that is wrong in his conduct? What is so reprehensible? Is it wrong to love riches, and to exert oneself to secure them? We cannot answer until we have made a distinction. If they be real riches, we answer no, certainly not, if the riches sought be worthy of the seeker, and capable of really benefiting him. The worldling in question does wrong, not in seeking riches, but in preferring temporal to eternal riches, and in putting the perishable goods of earth above the imperishable goods of heaven. Woe to you who are rich—this refers to earthly riches. So far from condemning the desire of wealth in itself, our Lord does quite the contrary. He offers us riches. He urges us to increase that desire. In fact, He positively bids us to seek wealth. “Lay up to yourselves,” He says, “treasures in heaven,” that is to say, strive to acquire real and genuine wealth. Do not waste your time in gathering together the useless treasures of earth, “where the rust and the moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal” (Matt. vi. 19). “But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (vi. 20). What we have to do then is not to uproot the natural craving to possess and to grow rich, but to direct that desire, the stronger the better, into the proper channel, and to seek by the exercise of virtue, and the performance of good works, to become permanently and securely rich, with the riches that will remain with us after all earthly riches have faded away and vanished like a dream.

So the same principle should be applied to every other passion that may possess us. Perhaps we are ambitious, and long to excel, and to make a name for ourselves. We are anxious to be esteemed and honoured by others. Is that a fault? Is it something that should bring the blush of shame to our cheek? Not necessarily; we cannot answer till we know whose esteem is sought. The desire of approval may be bad, certainly, and generally is bad; but it may be good. It depends upon the direction our thoughts take. To be anxious to stand well with the gaping multitude; to seek the approval of a world whose judgment is utterly unreliable and generally erroneous, and whose standards of excellence are wholly false—ah! that is reprehensible. But to wish to stand well with God, to labour and toil to win His approval, to conduct our lives, and to regulate our affairs, so that we may be pleasing in His eyes, and gain His love and esteem—that is quite another matter. Who will find fault with that? Therefore, it is not the love of esteem in itself that is wrong, but to love the esteem of the *world*. Indeed, it was the love and desire of esteem that filled the hearts of the saints, and that nerved them to undertake the greatest prodigies and to practise the most exalted virtues. Ambition when properly directed is a great power for good, and when properly used will lead to noble deeds and heroic efforts. Be ambitious, says St. Paul, but for what is really of value. “Be zealous for the better gifts” (1 Cor. xii. 31). To wish for the applause of men, rather

than that of God, is foolish. To esteem the vain breath of human praise, which can confer no real worth, and to care not for the praise of Him who alone knows the secrets of the heart, is a species of insanity. Hence we conclude that the desire of approval, of esteem, and of love is a good and excellent motive of conduct, if directed towards God, but is folly and sin if directed to vain and foolish man. In all these cases we have not to destroy, but to adjust the desires and feelings within us to their legitimate and only worthy object.

Take any other illustration. How many there are who attach the highest possible importance to physical beauty, good looks, and a comely figure, and who will labour to render themselves attractive. How many take endless pains to become beautiful. Thousands of persons make a livelihood in endeavouring with very questionable success to adorn and to beautify the bodies of others. The papers are full of advertisements of persons who undertake to remove disfigurements and blotches, and to smooth out wrinkles, and to restore the bloom of youth to the sallow and puckered faces of the old. They undertake to give a brightness to the eye, and a whiteness to the teeth, and to affix a charm and a loveliness to every feature. And how many vain women in the world of fashion there are who waste time and money upon such fruitless efforts, and put themselves to infinite expense, trouble, and inconvenience to appear beautiful in the eyes of men.

Is it wrong to wish to be beautiful ? Again we

reply as in the cases preceding. There is no harm in wishing to be beautiful. But it is certainly wrong to prefer the beauty of the perishable body to the beauty of the immortal soul ; and to think more of the admiration of man, who sees but the exterior, than of God, who sees the interior, yea, who gazes on the soul itself, whose capacity for beauty surpasses by an immeasurable degree the most exquisite beauty of the body, which is made for death, and destined full soon to feed the worms.

In all these cases our danger is not in possessing these feelings and desires, but in prostituting these feelings and aspirations, noble and admirable in themselves, to ignoble ends. The remedy is to lift them up from the earth and to direct them to higher and nobler things.

The great saints were men and women like ourselves. They were stirred by similar desires ; but they knew better than to seek to satisfy them with perishable things, which would be like feeding princes on the husks of swine.

1. They loved riches, but they were eternal and heavenly riches. The riches of earth they despised. They realised their hollowness.

2. They were ambitious and sought to be loved and esteemed, but not by men, whose judgment is vain. It was the love and esteem of God alone they cared for.

3. They sought beauty, but it was beauty of soul, beauty of virtue, which nothing can tarnish nor destroy, and which draws down the admiration of even God Himself and which will endure for ever in

heaven. This, and this alone, is true wisdom. All else is vanity.

If we would acquire this wisdom of the saints, and esteem things aright, we must meditate, and then we shall begin to see things as they are. It is only because we do not realise spiritual things that earthly things possess such a fascination for us, and captivate our souls. And the fraud can be detected only by a serious and patient study of divine things. It is in meditation that we learn to distinguish tinsel from the real gold, and the false from the true, and come to see and to feel the attraction of what is spiritual and permanent.

If, for example, a man attaches more importance to the estimate in which he is held by man than to the estimate in which he is held by God—and how often this is the case—this shows that he really does not know God : that he has not duly considered His infinite majesty and perfections. For if he had, then one word of approval from the lips of God would be infinitely more valued and appreciated by him than the highest praises of all creatures put together, even though continued throughout eternity.

#### RESOLUTION.

Resolve to value all things according to their true worth : and to set your hearts upon nothing but what is supernatural and everlasting.

## RICH AND POOR

“Shut up alms in the heart of the poor and it will obtain help for thee against all evil; better than the shield of the mighty, and better than the spear.”  
—Eccles. xxix. 15, 16.

**W**HEN we look over the face of the world, and consider the lives of men, we cannot help being struck by the extraordinary inequality of their conditions. Even without going beyond the limits of our own country, we note the most marked and deplorable contrasts. While one man lives in the lap of luxury, another can scarcely eke out the very necessities of life. While one man, not through any personal merit, but by the mere accident of birth, inherits a large estate, spends his days surrounded by every comfort and luxury, and draws a more ample income than he knows what to do with, another—without any fault of his—is born to poverty, want, and misery, and to hard labour all his life. Even here in England, one of the richest countries in the world, we have hundreds of thousands of persons passing their earthly existence in such dire want that they can scarcely ever secure sufficient proper food, or adequate clothing, or even a decent home in which to dwell. Every year a certain number die of actual starvation, if we may trust the verdicts of coroners' juries.

Such facts are blots upon our boasted civilisation. All men are in reality brothers. The greatest king that ever wielded the sceptre, and the poorest and most despised beggar that ever extended his palsied hand for a crust of bread, are of the same flesh and blood, and belong to the same great human family. Both have descended from the loins of Adam, and both have the same Father in Heaven, and the same high end and destiny awaiting them above.

In the eyes of God all men are by nature on the same level, and He loves and provides for all. Yet some are revelling in riches, while others perish from want. What is the explanation? Is it that God has not provided enough to satisfy every man? No. That is impossible. To say so would be to impugn the goodness, the wisdom, and even the justice of God. There is enough, and far more than enough, if the resources that God has put at man's disposal were (1) properly managed and (2) fairly distributed. As things are, some have far more than their share, and others far less.

The essential and primary cause of this, as of all other terrestrial evils, is, of course, to be traced to sin. Had man retained his innocence, the earth would have supplied all his needs without any painful effort on his part. Man would have needed neither clothing nor housing, while his food would have been of the simplest, and such as bounteous nature could have amply provided. The earth itself would have supplied all that man could possibly require or desire for his health, and happiness, and well-being, and would have supplied it

more readily and more easily than it now supplies the requirements of the birds of the air, or the beasts of the field. But when Adam sinned God cursed the very earth on which he trod, and declared that it should for the time to come "bring forth thorns and thistles" (Gen. iii. 17, 18).

As a consequence of sin, and in punishment for sin, God decreed that henceforth the necessities of life should not be attainable or obtainable save by hard work and bitter toil. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return" (Gen. iii. 19).

God decreed that man should labour and toil and exert himself, and spend his days in hard work. But man would never be induced to do this, of course, from choice.

In order that he should do so a stimulus was necessary; and this was provided by the pressure of want, the prick of hunger, and the cravings of thirst.

Hence, so soon as men began to increase and multiply, there at once began to arise two distinct classes—the wealthy and the indigent, the rich and the poor. The rich had leisure for study and intellectual pursuits. They governed, and made laws, and, in the course of ages, founded the arts and sciences. The poor, on the other hand, built their cities, tilled the soil, made roads, erected bridges, constructed implements of war, of agriculture and household goods, and other requisites. Thus each class, though wholly distinct from the

other, was made to contribute to the welfare of the whole community. In the new dispensation, that is to say, in the present order of things, neither the rich nor the poor can possibly be dispensed with.

God further intended that each should not merely contribute to the welfare of the whole, but that each should also work out his salvation in his own sphere of life. The poor are expected to sanctify themselves and to obtain eternal life by their industry, their patience, their sufferings, their humility and their conformity to God's will, even under difficulties. And the rich are expected to reach the same end by their compassion and consideration and generosity towards their less fortunate brethren. Thus, each would do honour to God, according to his position in the commonwealth.

The poor have undoubtedly duties towards the rich and towards those in authority. But to-day I wish to speak more particularly of the duty of the rich towards the poor—a duty which many of us, I fear, are inclined to forget, or at all events to minimise. Some persons seem to imagine that wealth carries with it no responsibilities. They argue that their money is their own, and that consequently they may do with it what they like. They contend that if they bestow some portion upon the indigent they are doing a good thing, and performing a virtuous action, but that if they retain every penny for their own use and pleasure they are still free from all guilt.

Such is not the teaching of God, whether reflected in the Scriptures, in the writings of the Fathers, or

in the treatises of theologians. Almsgiving is not a mere counsel of perfection ; to those who are well off it is a strict obligation. There are two means by which we are enabled to determine what is of strict obligation and what is a mere counsel of perfection. A duty is known to be of strict and positive obligation, firstly, when it is proposed in words which indicate or imply a command ; secondly, when eternal punishment is set forth as the penalty of refusal.

Both these conditions are realised in the case before us. The duty of almsgiving is not simply advised, as is, for instance, voluntary poverty, in the words : " If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor," but it is strictly ordered. The words of God, as we read them in Deuteronomy xv. 11 are : " I command thee to open thy hand to thy needy and poor brother, that liveth in the land," and our Lord in the New Testament says : " Give alms " (Luke xi. 41). And St. Paul, addressing Timothy, bids him : " Charge the rich of this world . . . to give easily, to communicate to others, and to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life " (1 Tim. vi. 17 *et seq.*). If further proof be needed of the strictness of the obligation, we have it in the punishment that God inflicts upon such as are hard-hearted and refuse to help their more needy brethren, and who think only of their own pleasure and material prosperity and happiness. How many there are, even in these days, who resemble the

merchant spoken of by our Lord in the Gospel (Luke xii. 16) who had grown so rich that he scarcely knew what to do with all the good things he had amassed. At last he said : " This I will do. I will pull down my barns, and will build greater ; and into them will I gather all my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul ! thou hast much goods laid up for many years : take thy rest, eat, drink, and make good cheer." Here we contemplate a rich, prosperous, successful man of business. As his fortune increases, and his wealth doubles, he does not think what he can do for God's poor, nor how he may relieve the needy and the orphan. No ! Those are not the thoughts weighing upon his mind. All he considers is himself, and his own ease and comfort. And for this he is condemned. Such, at least, is the opinion of commentators. " Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee." It is not God who requires such a soul. It is not for heaven that it is destined. It would seem to be rather the evil spirits, the devils of hell clamouring for their prey. " This night do they require thy soul of thee." And this is announced and published to all as a warning, for in the following verse we read : " So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God " (Luke xii. 21). From this we must understand that it will go hard with the rich if they are not " rich towards God."

From this example we may turn to that of another rich man spoken of in the Gospel. I mean Dives, who was himself clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. He, too, failed to

observe the precept of God, and employed his wealth only to gratify his passions and to indulge his appetite. What was his fate? "He died and was buried in hell." But why? We are not told that he came by his goods in a dishonest manner, nor that he was condemned on account of other sins, such as blasphemy or hatred, murder or adultery, but simply that he was hard and selfish, and had no pity on the poor and the unfortunate. His want of charity and his forgetfulness of God were the causes of his condemnation. Such at least is the teaching of St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom, and others, and if we imitate his hardness of heart, and his disregard for our suffering brethren, we shall undoubtedly likewise share his punishment.

That God will condemn to eternal punishment those who close their ears to the cry of the poor, and who turn away from their brethren in distress, is yet more emphatically taught by our Lord Himself. In St. Matthew's Gospel Christ is represented as seated in judgment at the last day. He there passes sentence of eternal reprobation upon those who have not exercised charity towards their less fortunate brethren. "Depart from Me," He exclaims, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Why? What is the cause of so terrible a fate? Of what crime have they been guilty? Simply of want of charity to their neighbour. "Depart"—because—"I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me not to drink: I was a stranger and you took Me not in; naked and you covered Me not; sick and in prison and you

visited Me not. Then they shall answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison and did not administer to Thee ? Then He shall answer them, saying, Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me. And these shall go into everlasting punishment " (Matt. xxv. 41 *et seq.*).

The Fathers of the Church and the saints and teachers propound the same doctrine. Indeed their words sound so strong and so strange amid our present surroundings and easy habits of life, that some persons will be inclined to think that either these saints and teachers are exaggerating, or that we are misquoting ; yet it is the simple truth.

Thus St. Augustine says that the superfluities of the rich are the necessities of the poor, and that they who retain superfluities for themselves are really guilty of robbery, inasmuch as they keep what in truth belongs to others, viz., to the poor. Again he says, not merely that it is uncharitable to indulge in luxuries, when Christ (in the person of the poor) is in a state of destitution, but that it is a great injustice, "*injustitia magna.*"

So St. Chrysostom, speaking of Dives, the rich man in the Gospel, says he was condemned to eternal punishment, "not because he was rich, but because, being rich, he showed no mercy nor compassion."

Another of the Fathers, viz., St. Augustine, commenting on the parable of Dives and Lazarus, remarks that the rich man was not heard amid his torments when he implored for a drop of water,

because he had paid no attention to the cry of the poor when on earth. That is to say, he was condemned through neglect of the duty of almsgiving. Therefore almsgiving must be a positive law. For no one is ever condemned for not obeying a mere counsel of perfection. "Why," asks St. Basil, "dost thou abound while thy neighbour begs? Why but that thou shouldst heap up merit for thyself by giving; as thy neighbour does for himself by his patience and his meekness in suffering? Art thou not a robber, when the goods God has bestowed on thee to be distributed to the indigent thou treated as thy own? The corn that is lying idly in thy barns is the bread of the needy; the clothes that thou lockest up in thy closets are the garments of the naked; the money that thou storest away beyond thy true needs belongs to those who have none." These, my dear brethren, are not my words. Such sentences might indeed sound strange and unwarranted did they originate with me. I do but repeat, in all humility, what great saints and doctors of the Church have said; I do but re-echo words spoken by some of the most famous preachers hundreds of years ago. We may perhaps deduct something on the score of rhetorical expression; we may allow a certain exaggeration due to the oratory of the pulpit, but we cannot deny the force of such extracts, or altogether explain away their meaning to suit the common practice of many worldly men at the present day.

Though many do not like to admit it, even to themselves, yet the truth is that almsgiving is a

serious and solemn obligation, and binding under the severest penalties. But, dear brethren, it is not by threats that we shall be most readily led to exercise generosity and compassion towards our less fortunate brethren, but rather through our sympathy with the poor, through our love of Jesus Christ, who being rich became poor, and through our appreciation of the advantages that flow from this form of charity. Many of us, perhaps, have never had any actual and personal experience of the misery and want that fall to the common lot of thousands of our own fellow-men ; we have never known what it is to feel the pinch of poverty, and to hunger and thirst, and to have no means of satisfying our needs ; to be numbed with the cold, and to have not so much as a few sticks to light a fire, and no clothing that will keep out the bitter, biting frosts. Let us try to realise all this. Let us try to understand what pain and humiliation and misery it all entails, and our hearts will melt with compassion, and we shall certainly make some effort to befriend and to help them.

Even for our own sakes we shall do well to cultivate a generous attitude towards the poor. It will be of immense service to us in the day in which we most need help and sympathy ourselves ; I mean in the Day of Judgment.

St. Bonaventure compares the giving of alms to the act of sowing. When a farmer scatters the golden grains of corn into the hungry furrows, the earth seems indeed to swallow up and devour them, but it is only "seeming," for, when the summer comes round, he finds these grains returned to him a

hundred or even a thousand-fold. In like manner the generous soul that scatters his guineas among the hungry poor appears to lose what he has parted with, but in reality he does but sow in God's field, and in the time of the harvest, *i.e.*, on the last day, he will reap a most magnificent and abundant recompense, and have his generosity repaid him a hundred-fold. His gifts will come back to him in another and a far more magnificent and satisfying and endurable form, and will rejoice his heart for evermore.

St. Cæsar Arelat compares the hands of the poor to those deposit banks in which people place their money, firstly in order that it may be quite safe and secure, and in the second place in order that it may increase and multiply. And this seems, if a quaint, nevertheless a very true comparison, for there is no doubt but that money given to the poor, or spent in other charitable ways, is in very truth money well and prudently invested and put out to the highest possible interest, and in the securest manner imaginable.

#### RESOLUTION.

Let us embark upon such a profitable form of trade, and lay up for ourselves treasures, *not* where the moth devours, and thieves break through and steal, but in that heavenly country where we shall one day find the untold treasures and the everlasting rewards which our alms and donations have so happily purchased.

## ON THE ADVANTAGES OF ALMSGIVING

“It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive.”  
—Acts xx. 35.

**F**EW things in the Bible are so startling as its denunciations of wealth. In fact, the Scripture contains some expressions so exceedingly strong and energetic that we would scarcely dare employ them, did they emanate from any lesser authority. “Woe to you who are rich,” it exclaims, and “Hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. xix. 23). So again, “The desire of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim. vi. 10). And, “Those who would become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snares of the devil” (1 Tim. vi. 9), etc., etc. This, dear brethren, is only too true, and it is of importance, when reading or hearing these and similar statements, that we should bear in mind that they do not express the verdict of any ordinary observer, however wise, however shrewd, and however experienced, but that they are the inspired and infallible words of Him who can read the secrets of every heart, and who sees the future as clearly as the present or the past. They are, in short, the grave warnings of Divine Wisdom.

We are not, of course, to infer from this that money

is something, "evil in itself"; no! nor that it necessarily leads to perdition. No! All that is meant is that, speaking generally, and as a rule, money is a prolific source of temptation, and a real danger, unless we are constantly on our guard. Nor is this difficult to admit. And why? Well, for various reasons. (1) In the first place, there can be no doubt but that great riches tend to exalt a man, and place him in a position of superiority, not in reality indeed, but at least in the judgment of the world. Though, in the eyes of God, he may be a moral leper and an outcast, yet he will be flattered and fawned on by the world. Because he is rich, he is made much of, and thousands wait to do him reverence, and vie with one another to fan and foster his pride and vanity. Consequently, unless he has strength of character and grace enough to see through all this flattery and adulation, and to esteem it at its worth, *i.e.*, as mere vain froth and foolish chatter, and to realise his own nothingness and unworthiness, he may easily come, at last, to share the awful fate of the rich man in the Gospel, of whom the only thing recorded is that "he died and was buried in hell"! (2) Another danger of wealth arises from the fact that it leads very readily and very naturally to self-indulgence. It enables its possessor to surround himself with bodily comforts, pleasures and enjoyments, to nourish himself on choice food, and to clothe himself with fine raiment, and, in a word, to lead a life of idleness and dissipation, of ease and of luxury, a life, therefore, be it observed, in woeful contrast to that spirit of hardness, mortifi-

cation, and self-denial commanded by Christ, and without which it is impossible for a man to be His true disciple. A life of softness and luxury is a life impossible to reconcile with the terms laid down by the Master : " If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." In short, while it is true that vast possessions make the practice of penance exceedingly difficult, on the other hand the command still remains unaltered. " Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (3) Further, a wealthy man occupies a position of danger, inasmuch as he has both the leisure and the means of gratifying his very worst passions and lusts, and of feeding his most animal inclinations to the full. His wealth supplies him with every facility of self-indulgence. " Money," it has been wisely said, " opens all locks." And again, " If gold goes first, all ways lie open." With money one may purchase the service of others, and bribe-men to do pretty well what one likes. Hence, money is a terrible snare, and a dangerous pitfall, in the hands of a proud and unscrupulous man. (4) Another effect of wealth is to draw men's hearts down to earth, and to immerse their minds in worldly things. It makes them earthly-minded. A wealthy man is apt to become more and more absorbed in the things of time, and less and less interested in the things of eternity. In fact, many end, at last, by practically making their heaven here upon earth. Such men must not be surprised, then, to find out, at the last day, that there is no reward awaiting them in the

next world. For to such our Lord will say : "Amen, I say to you, you have already received your reward." (5) To these difficulties and dangers and temptations which follow in the wake of wealth, we may add the further danger arising out of the cares and anxieties and mental worries which are always connected with the management and disposal of money. Those who possess it have to think about it, to watch over it, to attend to its proper investment, and to defend themselves from what may cause its loss—all of which is a dreadful distraction, and the destruction of recollection and attentive prayer. Then, in trying to increase their gains, they often grow less and less particular as to the means employed, and so get involved in acts of injustice and fraud. These are some few of the many reasons why the Holy Spirit warns us that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But, happily, there is another side to the picture. Though wealth is, most undoubtedly, often a very real source of sin and damnation, yet God is so good that He enables us, if I may so say, to change its whole character, to deprive it of its evil nature, and to rob it of its sting. In fact, we have the remarkable power given us to transform this natural enemy into a most valuable friend, to convert this agent of evil into a most powerful agent of good. Thus, to use our wealth in the service of God, to employ it in helping, consoling, comforting, and enriching others, to place our money into the hands of the poor and afflicted, is, in the truest sense, to convert an enemy into a friend. This is what our

Lord calls "making friends of the mammon of iniquity." Hence, if thousands of rich people are lost eternally, through making a bad use of money, so, we may well believe, thousands are undoubtedly saved through the good use that they make of it.

We have pointed out some of the dangers accompanying the possession of riches ; let us now say something concerning the spiritual advantages that it puts into our hands. (1) When we bestow an alms upon the poor, we may perhaps flatter ourselves that we are rendering them a real service, and indeed, in a sense, we are, but in sober truth it must be acknowledged that we are doing immeasurably more for ourselves than for anyone else. Though it may sound paradoxical, yet it is true that in parting with our gifts we are enriching ourselves far more than the poor to whom we distribute them. What says the Holy Ghost ? He says : " It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive." He assures us that one who bestows an alms is more to be envied, and reaps a richer harvest, than he who receives it. And this is evident to all who choose to give the matter a moment's thought. For what is it that a man does when he contributes a few shillings or pounds to a charity ? Well, it is true that he parts with some small fraction of his earthly goods. But does he receive nothing in return ? Is not the transaction more of the nature of a gain than of a loss ? Verily, he receives vastly more than he gives. Yes, immeasurably more. Let us compare the advantages accruing to the two, respectively, *i.e.*, to the donor and to the

receiver. The poor mendicant has his immediate and purely material needs satisfied. He is the better off by a few shillings. The cravings of hunger are stilled. And he no longer shivers with cold. True. But the donor! Ah, he is the better off, not by a few paltry coins, but by that which is infinitely more precious than all the material wealth and splendour of the entire universe, or, for the matter of that, of a thousand universes, did they exist. He deprives himself of a little of this world's dross, and in exchange receives a heavenly recompense that surpasses, in value all that words can say, or mind conceive: for it is both supernatural in its nature and eternal in its duration. He makes a small sacrifice, and is rewarded as though he had bestowed a kingdom or an empire! As a fisherman catches a fish of great value with a contemptible worm, so he catches Heaven itself by the sacrifice of a bauble of earth. In short, to adopt the language of the world, he makes a most splendid bargain.

Further, my dear brethren, is it not enough to listen to the words of Christ to appreciate the immense value of charity and consideration for others? (2) In the first place, He selects charity towards others as the special and distinctive mark of His true disciples. He regards it as the badge or sign of union with himself. "By this let all men know that you are My disciples, that you have love one for the other." Now, this love must be genuine and practical, and must show itself in acts. To love the poor, the orphan and those in distress, means something more than to

wish them well. It means to be willing to make some sacrifice for them, to give of our substance, and, if need be, even to deny ourselves, in order to bring them help and solace. (3) Another motive inducing us to be generous is founded on the fact that our Lord has mercifully promised to deal with us just as we deal with others. "In whatsoever measure you shall mete out to others, it shall be meted out to you again, and more shall be given to you" (Mark iv. 24).

Our future fate, therefore, is in our own hands, and it depends upon ourselves whether God deals lightly and gently with us, or with harshness and severity. Let us then treat the poor as we would wish to be treated by God, by Him who has said: "I will show mercy to him who showeth mercy, but justice, and no mercy, to him who hath not shown mercy." To-day, as we bestow our alms, let us ponder over those divine words: "In what measure you have meted out to others, in the same measure shall it be measured out to you." (4) Then, there is another truly magnificent promise made to us by Jesus Christ in connection with almsgiving, which ought to arouse within us feelings of the greatest generosity and dispose us for almost any sacrifice. I refer to His promise to accept, as done for Himself directly, whatever we do to others, however humble and unworthy they may be. "So long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me." How often, when reading or meditating on the life of our Lord, we must have wished that it might have been our privilege to

have lived on earth in those days, so as to have been able to administer to Him, and to have supplied His wants. How deeply we felt for Him in His poverty, how thorough and sincere was our sympathy, and how fully persuaded we were that we would have done all in our power to help and succour Him in His great and pressing needs. What a real joy it would have been to us to lay our greatest treasure at His feet. No sacrifice would have been thought too great, no gift too valuable, when He is the recipient. At least, so we have often thought and so we have repeatedly declared. The question is, are these fine words only? Are they but empty phrases and meaningless sentiments? Or is there, at least, some element of truth in them? My brethren! *we can put the matter to the test this very day.* For Christ is still with us. He is in our very midst, in the person of the destitute, who are dependent upon us for all they need. What we do for them, we are, in very truth, doing for Christ Himself. He, the Eternal Son of God, accepts our gifts, is grateful for them, blesses us for our generosity, and will reward us for our alms precisely in the same way and in the same measure as though they had been bestowed upon Himself in person. "So long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me." Who, with these words ringing in his ears, can refuse the appeal God makes to you this morning by my unworthy lips? (5) But almsgiving is not only a privilege, it is also a strict duty. Indifference to the sufferings of others is not only

shameful and cruel, but it may easily become a deadly sin, deserving of everlasting death. In proof of this, let me beg of you to transport yourselves in spirit before the terrible judgment-seat of God. There we behold a hard-hearted man or woman now trembling, before the infinitely holy and just Judge. He is, alas ! found guilty, and condemned. But why ? Ah ! why is he driven forth from the presence of the angry Judge ? Listen to the appalling sentence of condemnation, and weigh well the cause that the Sovereign Judge assigns. And you will understand. " Depart from Me, ye cursed." But why ? Oh ! "*because* I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat, thirsty, and you gave Me not to drink, naked, and you clothed Me not," and so forth. Then the trembling soul will cry out in amazement and stupefaction, " When, O Lord, wast Thou hungry, and we gave Thee not to eat, thirsty, and we gave Thee not to drink, naked, and we clothed Thee not ? " And Hē will reply, in withering accents, " Amen, I say unto you, whensoever you did it not to the least of My brethren, neither did you do it to Me " (Matt. xxv. 45).

#### RESOLUTION.

Life is hurrying by, the years are growing few ; let us therefore begin before it grows too late to succour the needy, to scatter alms, and to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven ; for, as the poet says : " Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge."

## PARENTAL AUTHORITY

“He that shall scandalise one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea.”—Matt. xviii. 6.

**T**HIS world would be an exceedingly dull, dreary, solemn place if there were no children and young people to enliven it with their mirth and laughter and joyous prattle. Children are, unquestionably, a great blessing to those who possess them, and one of God's noblest gifts to men. “Unblown flowers” Shakespeare calls them, and “new appearing sweets.” Moreover, they are a source of perpetual entertainment and interest, and awaken endless feelings of sympathy, affection, and delight in the hearts of their elders. They are rightly reckoned on as a solace in our old age, and as a prop and a support in our declining years. We rely upon them to carry on our name and to hand on our family traditions to future generations, and finally we love to picture them to ourselves as thinking of us, and as praying for us long after we have been laid to rest under the green turf in the quiet churchyard. But if they are a source of great happiness, they are likewise a source of very great responsibility, for one day we shall have to render a rigorous account

to God of the manner in which we have watched over and cared for them. We call them *our* children, but, as a matter of fact, they belong to God far more truly and far more completely than they belong to their earthly parents. God alone is their true Father. That is to say, He alone is their Father in the fullest and most perfect sense of the word, and the earthly father is, after all, merely God's representative, one to whom God has delegated a part of His authority. Hence parents are under the strictest obligation to recognise God's claim, and to regard themselves as entrusted by God with the careful and religious bringing-up of His children.

This is a most serious obligation, to be carefully considered and loyally carried out. For it is a mistake to suppose that a child is virtuous by nature. If left to himself and to his natural inclinations and passions, he will certainly go astray, and wander far from the path of virtue. He will grow self-willed, disobedient, proud, independent, and greedy and self-indulgent. In short, he stands in absolute need of the training, and moulding, and forming hands of a wise and watchful parent. The first years of a child's life are among the most critical, because on them his future largely depends. As has been said so truly and so tersely, "The *child* is father to the *man*." What he is in after life depends on his early education. The mind of a child is not only a *tabula rasa*, so that you can write anything on it, but it is extremely sensitive. Hence a child readily receives every impression, whether good or bad, and is strongly influenced

by all he hears, and sees, and notices around him. He is aroused and attracted by the least thing, imitates, almost instinctively, whatever others say or do, and is ready to follow almost any lead, so that parents should be extremely careful to give their children good example, and never, under any pretext, to misconduct themselves or to give way to passion in their presence. They should have a great reverence and esteem of their innocence, which is so easily sullied. They should shield it as far as possible from all scandal. To scandalise the young and innocent is especially hateful in the sight of God, and will be most severely punished by Him. "He that shall scandalise one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. xviii. 6). Just kneel down, in spirit, at the foot of a child's cradle and contemplate the newly-born infant lying there in all the unconsciousness of placid sleep. What a picture of innocence! Its soul has come straight from the hands of God. How pure and spotless it is! For over it the cleansing waters of baptism have only just been poured. It is all aglow with divine grace. So beautiful and so priceless is it, that God Himself looks down from heaven upon it with ineffable love, and contemplates His own divine image reflected in it, as we might contemplate our own countenance in some crystal lake. So exquisite a being is ripe for heaven, and we may be excused if we feel a desire to send it there at once, to take its place among the very angels of God. But

no. God has other designs upon it. That pure and sinless child must be left to grow up and develop. Before being admitted into the heavenly courts, it must be tested and proved. God has decreed that it should be exposed to all the dangers and perils of the world.

It is a terrible thought, yet a very true one, that there are a thousand fierce and unscrupulous enemies already lying in wait for it, to sully its purity and to destroy its spiritual life. The devil and the world and the flesh, that have robbed many a soul such as this of its innocence, await but the dawn of reason and consciousness to declare a bitter and implacable war against this one also. What will be its fate ? Who can look into the future ? How will it conduct itself when at last it is launched into the midst of the wicked, pleasure-loving, godless world, as some frail boat is launched upon the waters of a dangerous, tempest-tossed, rock-bound sea ?

Call to mind, my brethren, that the vilest sinner, and the worst criminal, and the most blood-stained murderer and blasphemer that the world has ever known was once a pure, lovable, innocent child even as this and as ripe for heaven as this. The most diabolical wretch now writhing amid the eternal fires of hell, and paying the penalty of his infamy, was at one period of his life a simple, guileless, innocent child, without an evil thought lurking in its heart, or an angry word forming upon its lips. How comes it that one child develops in one direction and another in another ? How can we explain that startling paradox, that, starting, as it were, from the

self-same goal, one will develop into a great saint, like a St. Thomas or a St. Francis, while the other will become a Nero, a Caligula, or a Judas? Other influences no doubt have their share, and must be reckoned with, but the after career of a child, speaking generally, depends mainly upon the way it is brought up; on the nature of the first seeds, whether of vice or of virtue, that are dropped into the virginal soil of its heart; on its earliest impressions and experiences; on the good or evil example which it witnesses around it; on the true or false ideals which are set before it, and, in a word, on the greater or less purity of its environment, and of the moral atmosphere that it breathes. A child, in its early years, is tender, plastic, ductile, and easily moved in one direction or another. Like a young tree, it can be bent and trained and shaped, but this is no longer possible when once it has grown up. If a child is left to itself, and allowed to run about the streets, and to romp and play with evil companions, and to indulge without let or hindrance all its wayward inclinations, propensities, and passions, and to associate with whom it likes, to listen to what it likes, and to see what it likes, what possible chance has it of developing into a good, upright, honest Christian, loyal to God and Church, to country and to king?

Nearly all the saints have been blessed with excellent mothers, and their devotion, earnest piety, and genuine holiness have, no doubt, had an extraordinary effect upon their children. And surely this is what anyone with a knowledge

of human nature might have been led to expect. What does a little child know or care about the great world at large ? How far does it concern itself with the general history of the Church, or with the discussions of the schools, or the teaching of theology ? To a child the world is its nursery, the world is its home, its family, its companions. It looks upon its father and its mother as the embodiment of all that is right and true and best. It imitates them without enquiry, it follows them blindly ; their views, their conduct, their mode of life are accepted as so many object lessons, to be imitated and practised. Children are far more deeply influenced by what they themselves observe, and can see with their eyes, than by what they are told. They can understand and appreciate conduct and example far more easily and far more readily than dry precept. How can a child grow up sober if his parents are in a state of frequent intoxication ? How can a child remain modest, pure, and respectable if its parents lead loose and dissolute lives ? How can he guard his tongue and control his temper if his parents fight and quarrel, and use injurious words ? A bad tree will produce bad fruit, just as a good tree will produce good fruit. The reason that so many children turn out badly and irreligious, and grow up a disgrace to their family and their Church, is because parents are not what they ought to be. If they were really practical Catholics, if they esteemed their religion beyond all else, and always put the spiritual above the material, and the eternal above

the temporal, and the souls of their children above their bodies, they would take an immeasurably keener interest in training them up in the practice of virtue. Realising the shortness and uncertainty of the present life, and the endless eternity that is to follow it, their ambition would be to instil into their offspring the love of virtue, goodness, and truth. It would be a real joy and delight to them to see their sons and daughters growing and developing in piety, and ripening more and more for heaven. Like the mother of the Machabees, they would exhort and entreat and encourage their children before all else to obey the voice of God, and to endure all things, even torture and death itself, rather than transgress the divine law, so as to be united with them for ever in heaven. Like that admirable mother, Queen Blanch of Castile, they would speak with fervour and earnestness to their sons while they are still young enough to be impressed, and give them clearly to understand that, much as they might desire their temporal and earthly happiness, they laid far greater store upon their eternal happiness. Those of you who have read the life of Queen Blanch will remember how she was wont to take her beloved son, when a small boy, and clasp him to her breast, and entreat him with immense fervour to keep himself ever pure and innocent in God's sight. "I love you," she would exclaim with all the passionate devotion of a mother's heart. "I love you more indeed than I can say, yet remember, that in spite of this, or rather, for that very reason, I would rather a

hundred times see you lying dead and cold at my feet, than that you should ever live to offend God grievously." Such was the real heroic Christian piety of a mother who knew the true value of things, and who judged as God Himself judges. Is it to be wondered at that her son caught something of her own heroism and saintly spirit? Is it to be wondered at that her son soon learned, like her, to prize goodness and sanctity beyond all else; and that he developed into a great saint, whose feast the entire Church still celebrates each year? And who was her son? Her son was the glorious St. Louis, King of France, and ruler of a mighty people. His mother's words, his mother's example, his mother's prayers, kept him holy and unworldly even on the dizzy eminence of a throne, and amid all the seductions of a court. Where do we find such parents now? Where shall we find such true love, such heroism, such zeal? Alas! some have grown so indifferent and so careless that they will not hesitate to endanger their children's faith by sending them to non-Catholic schools and for the sake of some purely worldly advantage, often more fanciful than real, will calmly place them in the most dangerous occasions of sin. So weak is their faith, that they positively care less for the immortal soul than they do for the perishable body. That this is really so is easily proved from the fact that they would shrink from sending the child they love into a fever den, or into a region where some awful epidemic, such as cholera or the plague, is raging. They would care-

fully hinder them from wandering through a wood or forest known to be infested with wild beasts or poisonous serpents, lest they lose their corporal life ; but they show no such solicitude, no such anxiety when it is the life of the soul that is in danger. What ! is the body to be preferred to the soul ? that soul redeemed by the blood of God, that soul purchased at an infinite price, and made to the image of God ? O Catholic fathers and mothers, has the soul of your child no value in your eyes, that you will expose it, without hesitation, to every danger and on the most frivolous pretexts ? For the sake of that soul our Divine Lord did not hesitate to die. Look at Him, the infinite and the eternal, clothed in our nature, buffeted and bruised. His sacred body torn with the scourge ; His hands and feet pierced with nails ; His whole person in torment. Why is this ? What is it that He seeks with so much insistence ? He seeks to save souls—and we do not care. No, we send our own innocent children into danger, we bring them up in non-Catholic schools, allow them to mix with evil companions, and expose them to contamination and eternal death. Provided their worldly prospects seem improved, many seem to think little and to care less what eternal consequences may await them. Parents are commanded to love their children. The word love, in this connection, must be taken in its true sense. To love a child is to wish it well, to do all in our power to secure its *true* interests—its *eternal* interests. We have no real love for a son if we are ready to

sacrifice the infinite weight of eternal glory for the empty tinsel of earthly fame, or if we are willing that he should forfeit his eternal happiness for some passing worldly advantage. Let us examine ourselves seriously upon this point to-day, and call to mind the hour, not far distant, when we shall stand trembling before the Sovereign Judge, to give a strict account of the task that He has laid upon us. At that hour we shall realise, if not before, that it were better a thousand times never to have had a child, than to have allowed him to perish from a mistaken kindness, a false ambition, or through an unwillingness to correct and instruct in all patience and gentle firmness.

#### RESOLUTION.

Resolve to look upon your children as a most sacred trust, of which you will have to render a strict account, and let it be your delight to lead them, by word and example, along the path that leads to eternal life.

# A CATHOLIC CHURCH

(THE OPENING OF A NEW CHURCH)

“This is no other than the House of God, and the Gate of Heaven.”—Gen. xxviii. 17.

**Y**OU, my dear brethren, who are dwelling in this neighbourhood, are greatly to be congratulated on possessing this beautiful church in your very midst. Those amongst you who have helped to raise these walls and to spread this roof, and to complete the whole edifice by your generous donations, are especially worthy of honour, and may well feel gratified and contented on this day of its solemn opening.

For a Catholic church, wherever it is located, is always, and must ever be, a remarkable and wholly exceptional place. Consider the edifice in which we are now assembled. There is, perhaps, nothing especially remarkable about it, considered simply as a building. Indeed, there are statelier and more magnificent structures to be met with up and down England, and perhaps even in this very county. That is quite true. But the church enjoys the grand distinction of being a *Catholic* church, and there is something about a Catholic church which differentiates it from all other buildings, and which invests it with a character and an excellence

of its own. A Catholic church is totally different from every other, and possesses a value and a pre-eminence and a glory which has no parallel anywhere else in this world.

It may be small, it may be faultily designed, ill-constructed and badly placed, in some back street or squalid slum, as, indeed, it often is, but yet the fact remains that no lofty palace of the Cæsars, no sumptuous dwelling of Pope or of potentate, can for one moment compare with it in real intrinsic grandeur and worth. Why? On account of Him, my brethren, whose abode it is. Because, in short, it is the dwelling-place, not of any mere man, however great, nor indeed of any creature whatsoever, however exalted, but it is the abode of the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.

A Catholic church is, in the strictest sense, the *House of God*. Hence, when we enter within its hallowed precincts it is not to visit prince or king or angel or archangel, but it is to prostrate ourselves before One, compared to whom the mightiest and the noblest are but as the dust of His feet.

Unfortunately, we are so dull and dead in faith that we are, to a great extent, insensible of this, and scarcely realise the immensity of our privileges. Though readily moved by what we can see and hear, and touch and feel, yet it is only with difficulty that the spiritual and the supersensible can succeed in engaging our attention, and in arresting our thoughts.

We stroll into the church, we kneel before the tabernacle, but, because we have never actually gazed upon the unveiled countenance of God with our

bodily eyes, nor penetrated beneath the surface of things, we are in danger of being as little impressed and as little affected by God's actual presence as the patriarch Jacob was before God opened his eyes, and showed him, in vision, the nearness of the supernatural world.

Let me recall the scene, as it is set forth in the twenty-seventh chapter of Genesis. Esau and Jacob are two brothers. Jacob, the younger, through a piece of trickery and deception, steals his father's blessing, which belonged by right to Esau. This leads to a quarrel between them. "Esau therefore hates Jacob," says the inspired writer, "and says, in his heart, The days will come of the mourning of my father, and then I will kill my brother Jacob" (Gen. xxvii. 41). In consequence of this murderous intent, Rebecca, their mother, calls Jacob to her side, and says: "Thy brother Esau threateneth to kill thee; therefore, my son, hear my voice, and flee to Haran" (42, 43).

He takes her advice and flies for his life, fear giving wings to his feet. All that day, and far into the night, he hastens on and on through grassy valleys and over stony mountains, till at last, foot-sore and weary, he finds himself in the midst of a wide, open, wind-swept plain, far from the haunts of men. He gazes around. Not a tent, not a hut, not a sign of any human habitation is to be found in all the country around. So, overcome with weariness and fatigue, for want of a better place he lays himself down upon the bare ground, and resting his head on a stone in lieu of pillow, he soon sinks into

a profound slumber. And as he lies there, tranquilly dozing, behold ! a marvellous vision passes before him.

Though the eyes of his body are closed in sleep, the eyes of his soul seem to gaze up into the great star-spangled vault above. A beam of light flashes from the highest heaven right down to earth. Then looking, he beholds a gigantic ladder. The top reaches up to heaven's sapphire floor, while the bottom is resting on the earth beside his feet. This fills him with wonder, which grows yet more intense as he descries the beauteous forms of countless angels treading softly on the rungs of the ladder. They seem to form two mighty streams. For, while one set ascend from earth to heaven, the other descends from heaven to earth. Those ascending are bearing up to the throne of God the prayers and sacrifices and good deeds of men, and offering them to God. Those descending are bearing graces and favours and blessings from God to mēn on earth. From this Jacob learns that a constant communication and intercourse is being ever carried on between earth and heaven : a regular interchange of prayer and supplication on the one side, and of heavenly gifts and favours on the other. Then, on the very summit of this mystical ladder, Jacob beholds the Eternal Father Himself, leaning over, and as it were gazing down upon the world of men beneath.

The Scripture does not inform us how long this vision lasted. At length, the first streaks of light gilding the eastern sky, and heralding the dawn of another day, arouse Jacob from his slumbers.

Though his eyes are now open, and the vision dissolved, yet his whole being is palpitating with emotion, excited by his strange experience. Rising up at last, and shaking himself free from the trammels of sleep, he looks around on the desert waste, and cries out, in the fulness of his heart : “ Indeed, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not ! Oh, how terrible is this place ! This is no other than the House of God, and the Gate of Heaven.”

Dear brethren, to know, to believe, and to openly confess the truth of a doctrine is one thing, but to realise it is quite another. Jacob must have *known*, but he had never before fully *realised* the nearness of the invisible world. This vision came to him as a shock. It stirred him to his uttermost depths. It tore aside the curtain, and disclosed the presence of God Himself. He seemed almost to feel the proximity of the celestial spirits, and grew vividly conscious of the interest they take in the affairs of men. What, in his ignorance, he took to be a solitary desert he found to be palpitating with the divine presence, and peopled with bright and glorious spirits ; and he realised as he never did before that heaven looks down on earth and that earth is linked to heaven in a way he had never imagined.

So much for the inspired narrative. Now, the eminently practical question which I wish to put to you to-day is this : If Jacob was so exercised in mind and so wrought upon because the veil was uplifted for a moment, and he was allowed to actually behold the nearness of God and His holy angels,

what would be our own feelings, were God to reveal to us in vision, or in some such sensible way, the far greater marvels that are continually being enacted within the walls of every Catholic church. Oh, how much more reason should we have to exclaim : “ Oh, how terrible is this place ! It is no other than the House of God and the Gate of Heaven.”

Look around, and you will easily understand how a Catholic church comes to be considered as the gate of heaven. Take the history of any newly-born infant. When, for the first time, it is brought into the church and carried to the font, it possesses no claim whatever to heaven. Heaven is shut against it. It is “ without the gate.” It does not belong to the supernatural order at all. Its soul inherits the guilt of its first parents, and lies under a ban. Then it is held over the font, and lo ! and behold, no sooner do the saving waters of baptism flow over it than a miraculous change is effected. It is true that we who are standing by can see only the poor little body, but were it given to us to see the soul, we would behold a greater vision than that of the mystical ladder. We would see a transformation immeasurably more startling than took place when God cried, “ Let there be light,” and darkness gave place to the noonday splendours. We would see that newly-created soul, rescued from the power of the devil, and made a child of God Himself—and formed, in some mysterious way, to God’s own image and likeness. The gates of heaven, if we may so express ourselves, swing on their golden

hinges, and lie open and ready to receive the soul, now rendered pure and spotless, and all aglow by the graces and blessings received in the Sacrament—for by baptism the infant has been made heir to the kingdom of heaven.

Or pass from the font to the confessional, and consider what takes place there. What we see with our physical eyes is nothing to speak of: but if we could see as the angels see, a truly wondrous scene would meet our astonished gaze. Here comes a man whose conscience is burdened with the weight of mortal sin, on his way to the Sacred Tribunal. Oh, how foul and loathsome and hideous is the sight of that soul! It is bound over hand and foot in the power of the devil. The curse of God rests upon it. It is under sentence of eternal death, and its destiny is hell, and quenchless flames. Were any accident to sever the fragile thread of life, it would actually be carried down to the bottomless pit by the weight of its sin, just as a dead body is dragged down into the depths of the sea by a weight of lead. Yet, wonderful to say, so soon as the minister of God raises his hand, and pronounces the words of absolution, the whole scene changes—a change like the passing suddenly from icy winter to leafy summer. In a moment the soul is cleansed from its defilement. From spiritual death it is restored to life. The hellish chains that bound it fall off. From a child of the devil it becomes a child of God, and heir to the kingdom of heaven. The eternal Father not only looks down upon it “with a propitious and serene countenance,” as in Jacob’s

vision, but the three adorable Persons of the Blessed Trinity actually come down, and enter into that soul as in a living Tabernacle, according to the words : " We will love him, and we will come to him, and we will take up our abode with him."

All this is well known to us by faith. That is true, but just think what our feelings would be could we actually gaze on the uncreated and infinite beauty and majesty of God, and could we see Him taking possession of a soul but recently the abode of Satan, and the loathsome sink of sin and iniquity. Surely with such a vision before us we would exclaim with even greater reason than Jacob himself : " Indeed, the Lord is in this place." Surely we would cry out even more vehemently than he did : " This is indeed the Gate of Heaven," for it is through the graces received in baptism and penance and the other Sacraments that the bolts that bar the entrance are withdrawn, and that sinners are again reconciled with God whom they have offended.

But the church is not only the Gate of Heaven, it is yet more. It is the very House of God.

As you kneel before the altar you see indeed the priest clad in sacred vestments approaching to celebrate Mass. You see the chalice and the patin, the bread and the wine. But the solemn act, the sacrifice itself, with all its wondrous supernatural effects and graces, is wholly and entirely hidden. It all looks so ordinary and so simple, yet there is nothing in the world so wonderful as the Mass. The stilling of the tempest, the calling of the dead back to life, yea, the creation of the world, are insignifi-

cant and trivial acts, compared to the celebration of the Mass, in which Jesus Christ is both priest and victim. We assist at it a thousand times, and we watch the priest as he holds in his consecrated hands the simple wheaten bread ; but no mortal eye can penetrate the veil, and actually see the effect wrought by the omnipotence of God, as the words of consecration are pronounced.

Though *we* may be inattentive and distracted, myriads of blessed spirits are hovering around awaiting with rapt attention the utterance of those words, so that they may worship and adore their Lord and Master so soon as ever He is rendered present on the altar. If our eyes were not held, we, like them, would behold a vision that would entirely throw the vision of Jacob into the shade.

We would behold the heavens open, and the whole church flooded with celestial light. We would see the God of infinite glory and majesty, not looking down from a distance, but actually descending upon the altar. We would see the entire substance of bread disappear, and in its place we would find ourselves gazing face to face on Him who created us and all things out of nothing, the Omnipotent, who dwells in light inaccessible, and before whom even the angels themselves are not pure. Yes, Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, would be in our very midst. Not passible as He was upon earth, and subject to death ; but in all His glory and splendour. When He was transfigured on Mount Thabor, we are told that " His face shone as the sun, and His garments became

white as snow," but that was before He had suffered and entered into His glory. But Jesus Christ present on the altar is one and the same who now sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and whose possession constitutes the beatitude of the saints above, and whose countenance is the light of heaven. He comes in all His glory and majesty, and takes up His abode permanently with us. Day by day, and week by week, as the years go slowly by, He remains to receive our prayers, and to listen to our petitions, for "His delight is to be with the children of men." He is here, as a loving Father among His own children, and He is never better pleased than when their love draws them to His feet, so that He may enlighten them, comfort them, and pour out His graces upon them.

Nor is this all. He gives Himself to us, as our food, in Holy Communion. All that we can see indeed, with our physical eyes, is a small fragment of bread. It is our faith, and our faith only, that can discern the body of the Lord beneath these lowly elements. But if God were to open the eyes of our soul, how immeasurably would the vision meeting their gaze exceed in grandeur and beauty the vision of Jacob.

We could not gaze on so much glory, but would die of very excess of joy and happiness. Our hearts are too small to receive the full flood of delight that such an experience would let loose, and would break with the intensity of their emotion. And if ever we are saved, we shall find that heaven itself will be but little more than the bursting of the veil,

disclosing the full vision of the infinite beauty of God's uncreated majesty. Let us pray that that experience may one day be ours.

#### RESOLUTION.

In the meantime let us stir up the faith that is in us, and draw nearer and nearer, in this life, to our hidden Lord, that we may find ourselves in the full blaze of His divine presence in the next: for, though we can never be fully and completely happy while walking in the obscurity of faith, we believe, on the authority of God Himself, that "we shall be perfectly satisfied when His Glory shall appear."

# THE WISE AND THE BRAVE

## AN ADDRESS TO YOUNG MEN

**I** SUPPOSE there are few qualities in man that call forth such universal admiration as wisdom and courage. Nor is this either strange or unreasonable, for I take it that wisdom is the perfection of the intellect, and courage is the perfection of the will, and it is intellect and will that make man the wonderful being that he is.

Wisdom always commands respect. The world is ever ready to acknowledge its influence and power. A really capable, astute statesman or politician, such as Gladstone or Prince Bismarck, a celebrated scientist, like Secchi or Lord Kelvin, a clever and far-seeing commander, like Nelson or Wellington—in fact, a truly able and intellectual man in any walk of life is sure to arrest attention and to excite admiration. Wherever such a person may be found we instinctively place him on a pedestal and offer him our homage.

But if the world esteems wisdom, it esteems courage yet more. If it admires a man who sets before himself a high and noble ideal, it admires still more one whose whole life proves that he has the courage and the grit to act up to his ideal—one who not only aspires to fame by attempting some great

achievement, such as the discovery of the South Pole, but who loyally and persistently sticks to his purpose, resolved either to succeed or at least to perish in the attempt.

Many are to be found ready to espouse a noble cause for a time, and so long as the interest is novel. But what the world most applauds is one who will pursue it with a fearless, dogged, unflagging zeal, and with a mind absolutely made up to see it through to the very end, cost what it may.

Yes ! Wisdom and courage ! These are qualities that will always win approval. But where may we contemplate them in their highest development and perfection ? Who are the favoured few who possess them in an eminent and heroic degree ?

Are they statesmen, politicians, philosophers, warriors, generals, men of blood and men of battle ? No ! Most emphatically no ! I will make bold to affirm, and without any misgiving, that the very wisest and the very bravest of all men are the saints, the true and loyal servants of God. There is no shadow of doubt but that of all men that have ever walked this earth, none have been so incomparably wise, none have been so superlatively brave.

This is my thesis. This the truth which I am anxious to impress on the young men of to-day. And why ? First, because I want them to imitate the saints, and secondly, because I know they will never really exert themselves much to imitate them until they come to realise that they are well worth imitating, and that about them there is

nothing either silly or cowardly, but the very reverse.

When they get to know the saints better, when they grow more intimately acquainted with their gentle, winning, strong characters, they will gradually feel their hearts glowing with admiration, and their wills on fire with the desire to resemble them : so gentle, yet so strong ! so humble, yet so wise !

I have said that the saints are the wisest of the wise, and the bravest of the brave. Now, if this statement sounds strange or extravagant, if its undoubted truth has not already impressed itself upon you, it must be solely because you have never given the matter your serious consideration. If you do, the justice of my contention will become more and more certain and self evident.

Let us briefly reason out the point for ourselves. To begin with, let us take wisdom. Our thesis is that the wisdom of the saints surpasses the wisdom of all other men. It is more sublime than that of the astronomer, who contemplates the heavens and traces out the courses of the stars ; it is profounder than that of the geologist, who penetrates into the bowels of the earth and investigates the secrets of its lowest strata ; it outshines and eclipses even that of the most subtle and the most gifted philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, and of all this world's scientists, historians, and teachers. Do not express surprise at my speaking so dogmatically and with so much emphasis, and with such unwavering assurance ; for if I affirm this statement with an air of such conviction, it is because the

proofs lie ready to hand, and clear enough and simple enough to bring conviction to any mind which is illuminated by the true faith ; and I take it that it is to such only that I am now addressing myself.

Suffer me to give expression to my thoughts.

Among all beings there is but one who is supremely, absolutely, and infinitely wise, but one Being whose knowledge reaches from eternity to eternity ; who knows all things, past, present, and future, and from whom nothing can be hidden, and with whom nothing can be unintelligible or obscure, and that Being is God. " The eyes of the Lord," says Ecclesiasticus (xxiii. 28), " are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts." " For all things were known to the Lord God before they were created, so also after they were perfected He beholdeth all things " (29).

" The Lord knoweth all knowledge, and hath beheld the signs of the world ; He declareth the things that are passed and the things that are to come, and revealeth the traces of hidden things. No thought escapeth Him, and no word can hide itself from Him " (Eccles. xlii. 19, 20).

A man, at the opening of his career, knows nothing. His mind is a *tabula rasa*. We detect the first glimmering of wisdom so soon as he begins to share, however little, in the wisdom of God. Further, the more and more nearly a creature's wisdom approximates to the Creator's, and the more

he shares in God's knowledge, the wiser and wiser he grows.

In a word, since God is the infinite and uncreated Wisdom, it necessarily follows that the more completely and perfectly a creature's mind is but the mirror of God's mind, and the more fully his judgments are but faithful echoes of His judgments, the more truly and profoundly wise he must be.

Hence, if we esteem what He esteems, despise what He despises, approve what He approves, condemn what He condemns, hate what He hates, and love what He loves ; if, in short, we see all things through His eyes and judge all things through His mind, and keep our mind (to employ a musical term) in perfect unison with His, then our wisdom must be the very highest to which any creature can attain. Any want of true harmony, any discord or jar, would necessarily mean some falling short from the type, some loss of wisdom, some deterioration.

The above statement is surely perfectly clear, self-evident, and undeniable. But if you assent to it, then you must also assent to the consequence that follows directly from it, and that is that no one in this world shares so largely in the wisdom of God as the saints. In short, that the saints are absolutely and without exception the wisest of the wise. They may be poor, despised, of low extraction, uneducated even and unrefined, and, from a purely worldly point of view, far below the average ; but in that which alone matters, in that which alone really tells in the long run, they are immeasurably beyond all others.

*Their* wisdom is pure gold without alloy. Theirs is the real genuine article without adulteration. They are giants of sound sense and intelligence ; whereas we, by comparison, are but triflers, simpletons, fools ! Though they may seem to do foolish things—for in the world's eyes it is folly to love poverty more than riches, and humiliations more than honours, and death rather than disloyalty ; and it is counted weakness and folly to love those who hate us, to do good to those who calumniate us, and other “ foolish ” things which the saints do—yet, in sober truth, they alone are wise, and not only wise, but wise in the highest and truest sense, since they are wise with the wisdom of God Himself, and must be reckoned among the most successful and distinguished scholars in the Royal School of Jesus Christ.

While others run madly after worldly honours, and distinctions, and decorations, and high places, they step aside, hold themselves aloof, as unwilling to squander precious moments in chasing shadows, or in striving to grasp empty bubbles.

With most men the visible world with its riches and pleasures is the only real world, while the spiritual world is regarded as unsubstantial, shadowy, and uncertain of attainment.

With the saints, on the contrary, the only unstable, shifting, shadowy world is the material world around them, the visible world which is always changing, which is in a perpetual state of flux, and which is destined, ere long, to disappear like a phantom of the night, and to crumble to pieces like

the baseless fabric of a dream. On the other hand, the only reality in their eyes is the eternal, changeless, spiritual world where God reigns, and which the passing objects of time may indeed hide for awhile—as the clouds may hide the everlasting hills—but which, rolling away at last, will disclose to our wondering gaze the one stable and immovable reality. This diversity of outlook affects the whole of their life and conduct.

To sum up thus far : God is infinitely wise for the excellent reason that He beholds all things as they really are ; and the saints are wise beyond all others because they contemplate all with the eyes of God.

Not only are they fully conscious that God has created them for eternity and not for time, for heaven and not for earth, but they are able to form a fairly accurate estimate of the relative value of the one and the other ; consequently, they are vividly conscious of the unspeakable folly (to put it on no higher grounds) of sinners who are ever ready and willing on the slightest pretext to exchange eternity for time, and to barter heaven for earth. We all acknowledge that a sinner is a rebel and a law-breaker, but we do not all recognise so readily that he is also a fool, and the prince of fools. In short, apart even from its intrinsic malice, a sin is of all possible acts the most contrary to reason, the deepest violation of sound sense ; hence the Scripture declares all men to be fools for the simple reason that all men are sinners. Properly considered, every sin is the act of a consummate madman—an

act which no circumstance and no conditions can ever justify. Hence St. Augustine argues that a man who commits mortal sin must have lost either his faith or his reason.

Now, if every sin is an act of crass stupidity and folly (which given the faith seems to be a self-evident proposition), then it follows that the saints, and the saints alone, are truly wise.

But mere knowledge is not enough. Unless knowledge is acted up to, and unless it really directs and controls, and is actually applied to the concerns of daily life, it is useless, and indeed worse than useless, since then it serves only to increase our responsibility and to render us more guilty.

But to apply knowledge, especially *divine* knowledge, demands courage, and courage of a very high order ; and thus courage or bravery is found to be one of the most salient and essential characteristics of all the true followers of Christ.

By far the most fearless and intrepid of all men are the saints. Taking them as a class, it may truly be asserted that they stand in awe of no living creature, whether man or demon. There is but One alone whom they fear, and that one is God. In fact, they are the few who actually put in practice the admonition of Christ, who bids us to "fear not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. x. 28). History has proved over and over again that this is the constant attitude of the saints. When conscience is at stake they heed the threats of magistrates and

judges no more than they heed the rustling of the summer winds ; they smile unconcernedly at the edicts of kings and emperors, and remain unmoved under the most pitiless and inhuman tortures of even the bloodiest tyrants and oppressors.

Look at Elias, the prophet. On a certain memorable occasion God laid upon him a most arduous and perilous task. He was commanded to approach Acab, the powerful king of Israel, and openly to upbraid him in a public place. He was instructed to stand face to face with him, and to denounce him for his crimes. Now, Elias was alone—an unarmed man. He had neither servants nor retainers. Acab might easily have seized him and thrown him into prison, or even put him to death. In fact, it was no child's play to beard the lion in his den, in short to rebuke an irresponsible despot to his very face. Nevertheless, Elias never quailed. Standing there, in presence of the king, he boldly and defiantly delivered his message, leaving the consequences to God.

We find a similar instance of this superhuman courage in St. John the Baptist, who, in spite of the consequences, which he must have foreseen, boldly reproached Herod "because of Herodias," his brother's wife. For John said to him : "It is not lawful for thee to have her" (Matt. xiv. 3, 4). As we all know, "he was apprehended, bound, and put into prison," and soon after suffered a glorious martyrdom as the reward of his courage.

Or call to mind the heroic conduct of the seven Machabees, who, together with their mother, were

summoned before Antiochus, the king, and commanded to break the law of God. In spite of horrible threats they answered boldly: "No. We are ready to die, but we will never transgress the laws of God." Upon hearing this, the king, being angry, commanded brazen cauldrons to be made hot; he then ordered his executioners to seize him who had spoken first, and to cut out his tongue, and then to chop off the extremities of his hands and his feet, so as to strike terror and consternation into his brethren and their mother, who were present and forced to witness the horrible butchery. Then, thus maimed in all parts, yet still alive, he was brought to the fire and roasted on a gridiron before the eyes of his brethren and the whole multitude.

But the sight of even this refinement of cruelty, and the contemplation of these appalling tortures, could not damp the heroism nor shake the noble resolve of the rest. On the contrary, they at once began to encourage one another to suffer even worse things if necessary rather than offend God, and exhorted one another to persevere to the very end. Thus one by one the six brothers, never faltering or wavering in their loyalty, were cruelly tormented, until, at last, death mercifully released them from their agony.

At last it was the turn of the seventh brother, the last and the most youthful and the most delicate of them all—in years a mere boy, yet a veteran in courage. On him at least the king expected to be able to make some impression. While pointing out the torments prepared for him if he still persisted,

he strove to bend his will and to win him over by fair promises. He not only exhorted him by words, but he assured him with a solemn oath that if he would only give way and do what he was asked, he would make him rich and happy, and would accept him as a friend, and provide him with all that he needed. Well might these honeyed words have shaken the resolution even of a man. For it is hard to choose death while the world is smiling and beckoning one on. And he was but a boy, with a long life still before him, and with pleasure and happiness awaiting but his single word. But—but—that word was never uttered ! His young heart never wavered, but remained true and steadfast as iron.

So the king, realising that he was but wasting words, called the mother, and urged her to use her mother's influence with her only remaining son, and to plead with him, and persuade him to save his life even at the price of apostasy. And when he had exhorted her with many words, she promised that she " would counsel her son " (2 Macc. vii. 26). And truly she *did* counsel him, and to some purpose ; but not in accordance with the iniquitous suggestion of the infamous tyrant, but quite otherwise, and in the manner that becomes a saintly, God-fearing mother, who desires beyond all else to secure for her offspring the glorious inheritance of eternal life and happiness, and who utterly despises, as worthless by comparison, all that the mightiest monarch can offer in its place. What doth it profit to gain the whole world, and thus lose one's own soul ? No. She

looked into the face of her darling boy, whom she loved so wisely, and, as their eyes met, she implored him to remain steadfast, and not to disgrace by any weakness the mother who had borne him and nourished him at her breasts, and poured out her love so lavishly upon him. She bade him emulate the example of his six brothers, and by despising temporary torments to win a crown immortal. And he, in spite of his tender age, proved himself equal to the occasion, for "while she was yet speaking" the youth, as though impatient of delay, cried out with a holy zeal: "O king, why do you tarry? I will not obey THY command, but the command of the LIVING GOD." "Then the king, being incensed with anger, raged against him more cruelly than all the rest, taking it grievously that he was mocked. So he also died undefiled, wholly trusting in the Lord. And after all the sons the mother also was consumed" (2 Macc. vii. 39-41).

Another instance of the heroism and the unconquerable spirit of the saints is afforded by the three young men, Sidrach, Misach, and Abednego, mentioned by the prophet Daniel, who calmly withstood all the fury and wrath of the savage king, Nabuchodonosor. Rather than violate the law of God, they preferred to be cast alive—and were actually cast alive—into the fiery furnace, seven times heated.

We would love to dwell upon these examples and upon scores of others to be found both in the Old and in the New Testaments, but time will not permit. We would like to speak not only of strong men who

sacrificed all for the sake of God, but also of delicate women, tenderly nurtured and sensitive and refined, who nevertheless faced torment and death without wincing, and often with actual joy and exultation. And not only delicate virgins, but even mere children scarcely out of the nursery, such as St. Cyril and St. Agnes, but thirteen years of age, who proved themselves more than a match for all the might and authority of imperial Rome so pitilessly arrayed against them. For Rome itself could not bend their dauntless spirit. The pagan judges might and did destroy their bodies, but no power can bend or conquer a will supported and upheld by the irresistible might of God's omnipotent grace.

These are deeds of exceptional daring, showing the highly-tempered metal of which the saints are composed. They are instances which seize the imagination and excite wonder and admiration because they can be described, pictured, and staged ; but in reality, just as a glowing spark from a furnace serves but to reveal the fierce hidden fire raging within, so these isolated acts serve but to reveal the existence of the quiet, calm courage which underlies the gentle exterior even of those whose lives appear quite ordinary and uneventful, and which awaits but the occasion to manifest itself to the world.

The most conspicuous characteristic of a soldier is bravery, and every true Catholic must, from the very nature of things, be a soldier. For man's life upon earth is a warfare. His heart is the battlefield. Enemies are not only numerous, but subtle,

unscrupulous, powerful, and sleepless. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent alone shall bear it away.

We are addressing the Catholic Young Men's Societies. Then let us take a typical young man, who is working out his salvation in the midst of one of our great emporiums of trade, or in one of our congested centres of industry. Realise, if you can, the pitfalls, the snares, the stumbling-blocks of all kinds that are strewn about his path. Think, on the one hand, of the dangerous places of amusement, the loose companions, the opportunities of sinful indulgence, the almost incredible violence of the attractions and fascinations and glamour of vice in all its myriad forms. Add to this the terrific stimulus of bad example, the solicitation of worldly companions, and the scorn and derision often awaiting the more virtuous, who hesitate to follow them on their downward course.

On the other hand, consider the nature and condition of those who are suddenly and often without any preparation exposed to all these perils: their youth, their inexperience, their unsuspectingness, their presumption, their strong passions, their rebellious appetites, and the natural and instinctive thirst for pleasure and the craving for a new sensation inherent in every human breast. Consider, further, how easily their fancy is set on fire, and their curiosity aroused, and how impatient they grow to taste that forbidden fruit which the world so cunningly sets before them, and which to their untrained minds looks so surpassingly delicious that

they can scarcely persuade themselves that it is the deadliest poison and a vehicle of eternal death.

Now, if we are looking for an example of the loftiest wisdom and the truest bravery, it seems to us that it will be found in the youth who resolutely refuses to be deceived by appearances, who judges things as they really are, who estimates every object at its true value, and, in short, sees things even as God sees them, and who at the same time has the strength of will to triumph over inclination, to tame his fiery spirit, to rein in his fiercest passions, as a driver reins in his mettlesome steeds, and to stand firm and steadfast against every onset of the enemy, year after year, till the battle is over and the crown is won, as a rock stands year in, year out, amid the roaring breakers and the ruthless surges of some angry sea.

We are wont to boast of the pluck and daring of our gallant sailors, and of the splendid courage of our troops. We glory in them, and publish their successes to the world. We even erect statues in public places to preserve their memory to future generations. Our greatest writers immortalise their names in history, and our most renowned poets enshrine their deeds of prowess in imperishable verse. Who, to take a single instance, has not heard Tennyson's tribute to the cavalry who took part in the famous charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War in 1854, as they rode, at the word of command, to almost certain death :

Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die.  
Into the Valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

When can their glory fade?  
O the wild charge they made!  
All the world wonder'd.  
Honour the charge they made!  
Honour the Light Brigade,  
Noble six hundred.

Now, this is all very well in its way, and we do not wish to belittle such deeds, but it seems to us that there is a truer and a higher heroism even than that of the soldier on the battlefield—a heroism which will receive a fuller and a readier recognition in heaven, and a far more glorious recompense at the hands of God, and that is the heroism of the loyal soldier of Christ, quietly and without any public applause fighting his battle, and winning his spurs day by day under the banner of the Cross, as he wrestles, “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places” (Eph. vi. 12).

Any young man who resolves to steel his heart against the seductions of the world, and to keep faithfully his baptismal vows, and who has wisdom enough to distrust his own weakness, and to have recourse to the recognised means of strength, and who so preserves himself “unspotted from the world,” is deserving of the highest encomium.

Such a one is a hero indeed. It matters nothing what his position or occupation may be—whether a

king clad in royal robes, like St. Louis of France, or a beggar in rags, like St. Benedict Labré—whatever his walk in life, he puts all our earthly heroes to shame and eclipses even the noblest amongst them. He is one worthy to be looked up to. Not only is he more deserving of praise than the world's most distinguished men, but he is more certain of obtaining it ; and finally, in his case, it is a praise really worth having, for it will come from the lips of God, whose words are spirit and truth.

For what are earthly honours, titles, riches, fame, a great name, public applause ? Such things are but external ; they do not touch the soul itself, but merely serve to create an atmosphere around it which the merest accident can dissipate and dissolve ; whereas virtue and goodness are inherent, they enrich and ennoble and render God-like, not the body but the soul, and make a man truly and permanently rich in the sight of God and His angels, and of every one with intelligence enough to distinguish the shadow from the substance.

Associates and members of the Catholic Young Men's Societies, where is your ambition ? Suffer me to urge you, as you go through life, to hold up before your eyes continually the examples of those who have exhibited in their conduct the highest wisdom and courage.

Be glad to yield yourselves up to the fascinating influence of their truly noble conduct. Warm your own lukewarm hearts at the fire that raged within theirs ; dwell in thought upon their noble deeds, till they stir you as a trumpet ; and resolve to secure your

way to heaven by planting your feet firmly in the footprints they have left behind.

It is the fashion of the world to look down with mingled pity and contempt upon piety and holiness, and to treat them as signs of a weak, effeminate, and even cowardly character. No wonder St. Paul, in inspired language, tells us that the wisdom of this world is folly in the eyes of God.

To those who express such views we reply: If to trample on the world, to despise the opinion of men, to conquer self, to break through all ties that hold one back, to force one's way through every obstacle, to subdue passion, and to love truth, justice, purity, and honesty more than riches, more than success, yea, more even than life itself—if that be cowardice, then we must admit the saints were cowards. But this we cannot say without prostituting language and contradicting the acknowledged meaning of simple words.

You who are members of the Catholic Young Men's Societies, whether you attain to it or not, at least set before you the highest ideal. If you have any ambition, let it be for the better things. Imitate those who are really and supremely wise and brave. Then you will be truly great, and your greatness will be recognised, not only in this life, but through all eternity, so long as God is God.



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